



Cultural Landscapes of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne 2021

21 SEP – 6 OCT 2021

Code: 22138

Tour Leaders **Adrian Mialet, Bruno Eluère**

Physical Ratings 

Visit medieval cities, Templar castles, pilgrim churches, Renaissance châteaux and gardens; explore the prehistoric sites, old towns, local markets and restaurants of Dordogne's picturesque valleys.

Overview

This tour, led by [Adrian Mialet](#), travels across the great southern plain between the Pyrénées and the Massif Central, into the heavily wooded highlands of the Auvergne, and down the superb river valleys of the Lot, Tarn and Dordogne. For three days in the Périgord, [Bruno Eluère](#) joins the program. Bruno has over 30 years' experience as a certified and licensed Regional Guide-Interpreter. To comply with French employment regulations, Bruno will lead the program for two out of the three days.

- Discover the unique history of the Cathars and their cities and castles in Carcassonne and Albi.
- Visit some of the grandest pilgrim churches, at Toulouse, Moissac, Conques and Périgueux, built on the great medieval pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela.
- Explore the Templar and Hospitaller territories and the Commanderie in Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon, the Knights' headquarters dedicated to the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.
- Tour through one of the most scenic and dramatic regions of France, dominated by the lovely river valleys of the Lot, Tarn and Dordogne.
- Learn about the unique medieval frontier towns, *bastides*, such as Cordes-sur-Ciel, Najac, Sarlat and Monpazier.
- Visit châteaux that were once medieval fortress castles but later became majestic palaces surrounded by fine gardens.
- Visit Cro-Magnon era sites in the Dordogne, where Homo sapiens was first identified.
- See the spectacular cave paintings of the Late Stone Age in the caves of Rouffignac, Cougnac, Pech-Merle and Lascaux II facsimile.
- View the large prehistoric sculpted frieze at Abri de Cap Blanc.
- Amble through the weekly village markets and taste the famous Périgord delicacies (truffle, foie gras).
- Cruise along the Dordogne River on board replicas of traditional *gabares*.
- Sample award-winning wines and enjoy lunch at [Château Carbonneau](#) near Saint-Emilion, a family-run winery with strong New Zealand ties.

Testimonial

We were stunned by the beauty of this part of France. The history and the architecture blended to make it an unforgettable experience. The tour was extremely well organised and the leaders and guides had an exceptional knowledge of the area. Ralph & Chris, QLD.

16-day Cultural Tour of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne

Overnight Toulouse (2 nights) • Albi (3 nights) • Conques (1 night) • Saint-Jean-Lespinasse (1 night) • Sarlat (4 nights) • Montignac (3 nights) • Bordeaux (1 night)

Overview

Between the Pyrénées and the Massif Central lie three of France's most beautiful river valleys: the Lot, Tarn and Dordogne. In southern Midi Pyrénées we explore great cities of Mediterranean France, strongholds of the Knights Hospitaller and Templars, and Carcassonne, city of the persecuted Cathars. We journey through pretty agricultural landscapes, deep forests and narrow river valleys to visit prehistoric caves, medieval fortified towns and castles, Romanesque churches, Renaissance châteaux and gardens. In Toulouse, Moissac and Conques we study fine pilgrim churches, and in Albi we visit the remarkable fortress-cathedral and Toulouse-Lautrec Museum. We journey to isolated medieval bastides (fortified towns) such as Najac,

Cordes-sur-Ciel, Monpazier and Sarlat (home of a famous foie gras market), survivors of the Hundred Years' War. We encounter a rich variety of domestic architecture, each town with its own distinctive atmosphere and picturesque dwellings. The delightful gardens of Eyrignac and Marqueyssac contribute colour and scent to the richness, variety and charm of this luscious region. At town markets we purchase food for picnics, and we enjoy a number of meals at traditional restaurants including wine-tasting and lunch at Château Carbonneau near Saint-Émilion. The region's greatest archaeological wonders, its cave paintings, occupy the valley of the Vézère, a tributary of the Dordogne. At Abri de Cro-Magnon our own species, *Homo sapiens*, was first identified. Local specialists show us a number of caves, some with the most exquisite artworks ever created. We visit Rouffignac, Cognac, Pech Merle, the interpretation centre of Lascaux II and the prehistoric sculpted frieze at Abri de Cap Blanc. We cruise the Dordogne River in replica *gabares* to understand how rivers shaped this land. Throughout, we experience the rich world of medieval romantic love, troubadours and a passion for life so vivid in this region.

Leaders



Adrian Mialet

History and art history graduate (University of Toulouse) and National Guide Lecturer at the National Prehistory Museum (Les Eyzies) & the caves of Lascaux, Font de Gaume, Combarelles & Cap Blanc. Adrian has lectured for ASA's tour to the Midi Pyrénées & Dordogne since 2012.

After studying history and art history at the University of Toulouse, Adrian received his professional training as a National Tour Guide in English and Spanish in 2007. His unique on-the-ground professional experiences as well as his passion for traveling have both enriched his mastery of multiple languages and his knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. Since familiarising himself with the richly ornamented prehistoric caves in the region, Adrian developed a passion for these works of art. Over the course of his professional experience, he has worked many seasons for the replica of the famous cave Lascaux II. After his involvement at Lascaux, he spent two years as a standin guide at sites such as Cap Blanc, Font de Gaume, and Combarelles. It was while working as a guide at these sites that Adrian not only enriched his experience as a tour leader but also became familiar with the difficulties of preserving prehistoric cave art faced by such sites. In 2010, he joined Perigord Welcome's team of professional tour guides. As he led regional tours for groups from all around the world, he continued to develop his passion for prehistory. Adrian was quickly chosen as referent tour guide for the agency's prehistoric tours. His experience includes leading tours for such reputable groups as National Geographic, Smithsonian Travel, and the Natural History Museum of New York. Today, Adrian continues to work in the region and has since enlarged his sphere to include sites in Ariège, Cantal, the Basque country. Adrian has taught for ASA since 2012.



Bruno Eluère

With over 30 years' experience as a certified and licensed Regional Guide-Interpreter, Bruno accompanies English-speaking visitors on their journeys through southwestern France.

With over 30 years' experience as a certified and licensed Regional Guide-Interpreter, Bruno accompanies English-speaking visitors on their journeys through southwestern France. Bruno was born and raised in the Dordogne area. In addition to his expertise and passion for prehistory and Middle Ages, he also has a deep love for the Romanesque sculpture and architecture of the Périgord. As such, he has taken on the long-term and deeply satisfying challenge of making a complete photographic inventory of the fine details of the Romanesque churches and chapels throughout the region. Bruno has also published many articles on all

aspects of life in Southwest France for local English-speaking magazines.

Combine this tour with

Silver Coast & Golden River: Art, Architecture & Culture of Portugal 2021
3 SEP – 21 SEP 2021



Itinerary

The following itinerary lists a range of museums, heritage properties and gardens etc. which we plan to visit. Many are accessible to the public, but some require special permission, which may only be confirmed closer to the tour's departure. 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. Meals included in the tour price are indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=evening meal.

Toulouse - 2 nights

Day 1: Tuesday 21 September, Arrive Toulouse

- Orientation Walk
- Basilica Saint-Sernin, Toulouse

Our tour commences in Toulouse. Upon arrival, participants on the ASA 'designated' flight will be included in the group transfer to our hotel. People who have not taken ASA 'designated' flight should meet the group at the [Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra](#) situated in the centre of Toulouse.

In the afternoon we shall take an orientation walk in the vicinity of the hotel and visit the great pilgrim church of Saint-Sernin (1075-1096). After the abbey church at Cluny (destroyed during the French Revolution), Saint-Sernin was the largest Romanesque church in France. It was one of the five archetypal pilgrim churches on the pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela, the others being Sainte-Foy at Conques, Saint-Martin at Tours, Saint-Martial de Limoges, and the great cathedral at Santiago. All these churches are aisled basilicas. In each, these aisles run down either side of the nave and around the transepts and semi-circular chevet. From the chevet of each church project chapels that once displayed saints' relics. The aisles that ran right around the church allowed pilgrims to process through the building to see the relics in these chapels without disrupting services in the chancel. Saint-Sernin was constructed from a richly coloured red brick. Its nave, the longest on the pilgrim route, leads to a crossing topped by a magnificent Gothic tiered

tower and spire. (Overnight Toulouse)

Day 2: Wednesday 22 September, Toulouse – Carcassonne – Toulouse

- Château Comtal, Ramparts & Basilica of St Nazaire and St Celse, Carcassonne
- Welcome Dinner

Today we drive southwest to what was once the medieval frontier between the Kingdom of France and the Spanish kingdom of Aragón, to Carcassonne, the walled city we shall visit. Before its integration into the French kingdom by Louis IX, Carcassonne was a stronghold of the Cathars, who were decimated by Simon de Montfort during the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229). Before the Crusade, Carcassonne, like many cities in this region, had been a centre of local power, jealous of its independence from larger hegemonies. Originally a Celtic settlement, then a Roman *colonia* (Carcasum), it became a Visigothic stronghold (508) that resisted the early Franks, was taken for a time by the Iberian Muslims (725), and had become the seat of a local county that often allied itself either to the counts of Barcelona or Toulouse. Fragments of Carcassonne’s Roman walls still exist, within the magnificent concentric rings of medieval ramparts defended by many towers. Louis IX founded a lower city across the River Aude from the original fortified city (1247), and even after it had lost importance as a bastion against Aragón (when the frontier moved further south) its towers and ramparts made the upper, older, city almost impregnable. During the Hundred Years’ War, the Black Prince destroyed Louis IX’s lower city, but could not take Carcassonne proper (1355).

Despite prosperity during the later Middle Ages as a centre of wool manufacture, Carcassonne slowly declined to provincial obscurity and its walls fell into such ruin that in the 19th century the French government considered dismantling them. Carcassonne’s mayor, the antiquary Jean-Pierre Cros-Mayrevieille, and the writer Prosper Mérimée, France’s first inspector of ancient monuments, protested, and the city was eventually restored in the 1850s and 1860s by the great Neo-Gothic architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. Carcassonne’s restoration became a key moment in the growth of French, and therefore world, notions of conservation and preservation. Much of France’s medieval built heritage had either fallen into disrepair or had suffered depredations through countless wars and the French Revolution. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc – who also restored Notre-Dame de Paris and was then working on Saint-Sernin, Toulouse – performed the massive feat of bringing Carcassonne back to its medieval glory. Although he was criticised for giving the Carcassonne’s towers steep conical pinnacles that were uncharacteristic of a southern region without heavy snowfalls, his restoration is nevertheless seen as a masterpiece, albeit with touches of Romantic fantasy.

We shall explore Carcassonne’s ramparts and visit its Château Comtal (Count’s citadel) and the Basilica of St Nazaire and St Celse. There will be time at leisure for lunch and to allow you to further explore the city. Mid-afternoon we return to Toulouse and enjoy a Welcome Dinner. (Overnight Toulouse) BD

Albi - 3 nights

Day 3: Thursday 23 September, Toulouse – Moissac – Albi

- Musée des Augustins, Toulouse
- Cloister of Saint-Pierre, Moissac

The morning in Toulouse will be spent exploring the town centre and visiting the Musée des Augustins. The Musée des Augustins, once a grand old Augustinian priory used as a residence and studio by Viollet-le-Duc when he worked on the restoration of Saint-Sernin, now holds a comprehensive collection of Romanesque and Gothic sculpture from the city’s churches.

In the afternoon we depart for Albi via Moissac, visiting the church of Saint-Pierre (1100-1150), which was once a Cluniac abbey. Moissac boasts a fine *trumeau* (door jamb) graced by the ethereal elongated figures of St Paul and the Prophet Jeremiah. Although much of the original monastery has been destroyed, its cloister remains. It has an important corpus of sculpted panels and capitals including figures in relief whose monumentality suggests that the artist, who also worked in Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, was inspired by antique sculpture, which was to be found in abundance in Southern France. (Overnight Albi) BD

Day 4: Friday 24 September, Albi

- Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile d'Albi
- Musée Toulouse-Lautrec
- Les Jardins du Palais de la Berbie
- Afternoon at leisure

We spend a full day in Albi, a city of red brick, reminiscent of Siena. It stands on the river Tarn, whose bed provided the clay for these bricks. We visit the Bishop's palace – the Palais de la Berbie – which has a fine garden and houses the Toulouse-Lautrec Museum, as well as Albi's extraordinary, fortress-cathedral, Sainte-Cécile. The Toulouse-Lautrec Museum, one of the finest museums devoted to a single artist in France, incorporates early paintings by the master and some of his most important images of Parisian life. There is also a collection of his posters and a section devoted to his lithography displaying many of his lithographic stones.

As late as the 12th century, the County of Toulouse was independent of the French crown. Its cities were wealthy and their merchants criticised the corruption of the Church. Many were Cathars, a name derived from the Greek word for 'pure'. Cathars believed in the strict separation of good and evil in the world. They were divided into two groups: ordinary believers who worked in thriving cities like Albi and Toulouse, and 'perfecti' who separated themselves from the world, living lives of exemplary abstinence, which contrasted awkwardly with abuses within the Church. The French crown mounted the Albigensian Crusade (c.1208-1244) to destroy the Cathar 'heresy'. Its hidden motive was to conquer the independent south and incorporate it into the French realm. The population of Albi was slaughtered and Bishop Bernard de Castanet (1240-1317) constructed the new Cathedral of Sainte-Cécile (1282-1330; porch 1519-1535) using riches confiscated from the Cathars. The building, with huge, smooth defensive walls and curved tower-buttresses (so that stones hurled by siege machines would glance off them) was designed like a fortress to remind the Albigensians of the authority of the Church whose dogmas they had questioned.

The rest of the afternoon will be at leisure to explore this beautiful city for yourself. (Overnight Albi) B

Day 5: Saturday 25 September, Albi – Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon – La Cavalerie – La Couvertoirade – Millau Viaduct – Albi

- Templar and Hospitaller Circuit in the Larzac
- Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon: the headquarters of a local Templar *Commanderie*
- Templar and Hospitaller villages of La Cavalerie and La Couvertoirade
- Millau Viaduct (time permitting)

The south of France was enriched by Mediterranean trade and pilgrimage to Santiago, but it was also a highly contested region, where the forces of the French and Spanish kingdoms, local potentates such as the Counts of Toulouse and Carcassonne, and religious groups like the Cathars, all vied for power. Another force in this region was the Knight Templar, originally dedicated to the succour of pilgrims in Jerusalem, which had been transformed during the Crusades into an aristocratic, military order. Many myths have been

spun around the Templars, most of which, such as their involvement in occult practices, are apocryphal. They nevertheless constituted a powerful force in medieval Europe, amassing vast wealth that raised the jealousy of kings. The Templars, like the Knights Hospitaller (later Knights of Malta) attracted charitable donations, including vast tracts of land. Among their many activities was banking, and Philip IV (1268-1314), who was heavily indebted to them, had many arrested, tortured to produce false confessions, and burned at the stake as heretics. He also forced Pope Clement V to disband the Order in 1312.

We spend today exploring Templar territories in the Larzac region to the east of Albi, visiting Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon, their regional headquarters (*commanderie*), and their stunningly picturesque fortified village of La Couvertoirade. Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon occupies a deep valley between ridges of the Larzac. It is the best-preserved Templar commandery in France, having been established by the Order in 1159, and then taken over by the Hospitallers when Philip IV eliminated the Templars. La Couvertoirade, in a wildly beautiful setting, deep in the Larzac on the edge of the Cévennes National Park, was a Templar stronghold until the fall of the Order, when it also was taken over by the Knights Hospitaller who built the village's curtain wall between 1439 and 1450. This wall still stands, and within it are a church, a small château, and a number of lovely old houses.

We shall also have lunch at a small restaurant in La Cavalerie, another fortified Larzac Templar site, halfway between Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon and La Couvertoirade.

We return to Albi in the late afternoon and, time permitting, make a brief stop to view the Millau Viaduct a cable-stayed road-bridge that spans the valley of the river Tarn. Designed by the French structural engineer Michel Virlogeux and British architect Norman Foster, it is the tallest bridge in the world. (Overnight Albi) BL

Conques - 1 night

Day 6: Sunday 26 September, Albi – Cordes-sur-Ciel – Najac – Conques

- Bastides of Cordes-sur-Ciel & Najac

Today we drive north to the secluded town of Conques through the region of the Aveyron Gorges, visiting beautiful hill-top bastides, Cordes-sur-Ciel and Najac.

Bastides played a vital role in the emergence of France after the Dark Ages and the consolidation of royal power after the Albigensian Crusade. They also figured in the ensuing territorial struggle with the Plantagenets of England, the Hundred Years' War. A bastide was a fortified village or town, usually of regular plan, in which the rural population was forced to reside so it could be defended as well as exploited by the crown or a feudal lord. Both the Plantagenet and French monarchies built bastides, and one of their later functions was as strongholds in the Hundred Years' War. Before the advent of these very particular communities, the landscape of this heavily forested, under-populated region had only tiny, scattered, isolated settlements, abbeys or the strongholds of the local nobility. The bastides were therefore the 'frontier towns' or 'colonies' of the Middle Ages, which tamed the land. Although an ideal bastide has a grid plan centring on an arcaded market square, they in fact took many forms that depended upon topography, microclimate and available building materials.

The plan of Cordes, the very earliest bastide, does not conform to type. Its organic plan accommodated the urban fabric to the steep bluff upon which it was located. Its domestic architecture is distinctive to the region. Originally, its limited agricultural domain would have been surrounded by forest, for Cordes was founded in virgin territory. Its neighbour Najac, a fine, small bastide that occupies a craggy cliff, is dominated by a partly ruined château built by the villagers in 1253 on the orders of Alphonse de Poitiers.

Najac's 13th-century Church Saint-Jean, erected by the local population as a punishment for their Cathar beliefs, overlooks the village, while at the opposite end, the *faubourg* (medieval suburb or extension to the town) has the typical architecture of many bastides, with timber-framed houses and commercial arcades around an open area. Najac's houses are so valued that they have been registered in a special catalogue.

After lunchtime in Najac, we turn east again into deep, heavily forested valleys formed by the river Lot to Conques, one of France's greatest treasures. Tonight we stay in a delightful small hotel occupying a late medieval house next to Conques' famous church. (Overnight Conques) BD

Saint-Jean-Lespinasse - 1 night

Day 7: Monday 27 September, Conques – Montal – Saint-Jean-Lespinasse

- Benedictine Abbey of Sainte-Foy, Conques
- Abbey Museum, Conques
- Château de Montal

Conques owes its fame to the Benedictine Abbey of Sainte-Foy (1031-1090) that, despite its isolation, became one of the most famous shrines on the medieval pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela (northern Spain). The church is one of five archetypal pilgrim basilicas, along with Saint-Sernin (Toulouse), Santiago de Compostela, Saint Martin (Tours: destroyed) and Saint-Martial (Limoges). It has a fine east-end with radiating chapels, a narrow, high nave with galleries, and a well-preserved coloured portal depicting the *Last Judgement* in vividly descriptive detail. The abbey was founded in 866 in a lonely, thickly wooded region of the Dordogne. It became an important station on the pilgrim route to Santiago from Le Puy because of the extraordinary popularity of the saint, martyred in 330 AD, whose relics were brought here in five centuries later. The adolescent girl Sainte Foy, like Saint George, was of obscure origins, but later became so popular that monuments to her were founded throughout Britain, continental Europe and the Near East. Her strange reliquary, fashioned in the form of an enthroned monarch, is the only surviving example of a form popular in the 11th century. It is housed in Conques' Abbey Museum, which holds one of Europe's best-preserved collections of medieval pilgrim art.

We shall spend the morning visiting the abbey church and the museum of Conques, and wandering through the small town viewing its lovely small houses.

In the afternoon, we shall drive west. We visit the Château de Montal whose powerful towers and picturesque profile give it the aspect of a fortress. Built in 1523-4, it is, however, a Renaissance palace similar to the great châteaux of the Loire, and the rich decoration of its stately façades reflects a political stability unknown earlier, when bastides were used to tame this part of France and when French and English armies fought each other for control of it. Of particular note are Montal's portrait sculptures of Robert de Balsac, his wife Antoinette de Castelnau, and members of their family that grace the upper storeys of the courtyard façade. Within, the château has a magnificent central staircase and beautiful fittings, such as great ornamental fireplaces. After touring the château and its gardens, we walk to our hotel, the Hôtel des Trois Soleils de Montal is overlooking the Bave Valley outside the village of Saint-Jean-Lespinasse. The hotel is noted for its fine cuisine and we shall dine here tonight. (Overnight Saint-Jean-Lespinasse) BD

Sarlat - 4 nights

Day 8: Tuesday 28 September, Saint-Jean-Lespinasse – Autoire – Loubressac – Carennac – Sarlat

- Autoire
- Loubressac

- Carennac Church & Cloister

Today we explore two villages close to St Céré and then turn west along the valley of the Dordogne. Our route takes us through the heart of an ancient agricultural region with numerous beautiful châteaux, villages and Romanesque pilgrim churches. We start our journey, travelling through Autoire, located at the head of the Gorge d'Autoire, a chasm running south from the Dordogne, to the nearby village of Loubressac where we break for a picnic lunch.

Near Loubressac, the Bave meets the Dordogne, whose south bank we follow to Carennac. Here we stop briefly to view the medieval tympanum over the doorway of the church. Carved tympana, often with graphic depictions of the *Last Judgement*, were a feature of Romanesque churches, presenting the faithful entering the shrine with awesome visions of Christ or terrifying views of eternal punishments meted out to sinners. You will be able to compare Carennac's *Last Judgement* with those you have seen at Moissac and Conques, and will see how each has a very different style compared to its counterparts. From here we follow the Dordogne as it winds its way west and continue on to Sarlat-la-Canéda. On the way, we stop in Souillac to visit the Sainte-Marie Abbey Church built between 1075 and 1150, one of the finest examples of Romanesque and Byzantine architectural styles in the South-West of France. (Overnight Sarlat) BL

Day 9: Wednesday 29 September, Sarlat – Les Eyzies de Tayac – Rouffignac – Sarlat

- Musée National de la Préhistoire, Les Eyzies
- Abri Pataud, Les Eyzies
- Prehistoric cave of Rouffignac

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For over a century the Dordogne has been celebrated for its magnificent painted caves from the Late Pleistocene, what archaeologists call Late Paleolithic (40,000-10,000 BC). At this time humans were sufficiently technologically advanced to survive the extreme cold of the Last Ice Age in this region, and to hunt the huge herds of animals that roamed it. For 25,000 years in this region of limestone plateaux and verdant valleys, humans decorated caves with engravings, sculptures and paintings, depicting all kinds of animals in extraordinary, vividly naturalistic detail. Around 10,000 BC the climate ameliorated and the magnificent cave decorations cease, possibly because the great herds of bison, deer and other animals that man had hunted – and depicted – moved further north to new pastures that had been freed from the retreating ice cover.

This morning we visit the Musée National de la Préhistoire at Les Eyzies-de-Tayac. It is situated in a restored château on a terrace overlooking a plain on which vast herds of reindeer and other beasts would have roamed in the Late Stone Age. The château, in fact, is located on the site of a Prehistoric settlement chosen, no doubt, for the excellent view it provided those scanning the plain for game. The museum holds, among other exhibits, an amazing collection of artefacts such as beautifully sculpted reliefs of animals.

Following lunch in Les Eyzies, we visit the excavation site of Abri Pataud, the only prehistoric site in the Dordogne to have been converted into a museum. It is situated 15 metres above the river Vézère at the foot of an imposing cliff that dominates the village of Les Eyzies-de-Tayac.

Our last visit today is Rouffignac, a vast prehistoric cave which includes ten kilometres of galleries, two of which were frequented by Cro-Magnon artists. It's also exceptional for its more than 150 depictions of

mammoths. An electrical train takes us through. This is linear art: animals and signs outlined in manganese dioxide, or finely engraved, or finger-drawn where the wall's surface is soft enough. The simplicity and accuracy of line here reveal the artist's talent and expertise more in this cave, perhaps, than anywhere else. The Great Ceiling, one kilometre from the entrance, offers the viewer an unforgettable whirl of mammoths, bisons, and ibex. (Overnight Sarlat) B

Day 10: Thursday 30 September, Sarlat – Monpazier – Sarlat

- Bastide town of Monpazier & Thursday Market
- Orientation walk of Sarlat-la-Canéda
- Late afternoon at leisure

This morning we drive to the bastide of Monpazier, nominated one of 'plus beaux villages de France'. It is not only the best-preserved bastide in the Dordogne, but is also considered the most typical example of a bastide in the entire south-west of France. King Edward I of England founded Monpazier in 1284 with the help of Pierre de Gontaut, Lord of Biron, and it was only during the reign of King Charles V of France (1366-1380) that it was taken by the French. In 1574 the Huguenot captain, Geoffroi de Vivans, took control of Monpazier and in 1594 it became a centre of the Peasant's Revolt.

Despite the ravages of the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion, Monpazier has remained remarkably unchanged for 700 years. Monpazier's urban core is perfectly quadrilateral in overall layout, its symmetrical, gridded plan covering an area of 400 x 220 metres. The town's grid is crossed by four transverse streets, which divide it into rectangular precincts. Medieval and 17th-century houses surround the central Place des Cornières; originally, all of Monpazier's houses were exactly the same size and separated from one another by narrow side alleys or androns to prevent the spread of fire. The ground floor of those surrounding the square form a continuous arcade, a feature typical of bastides, also seen in northern Italy and in Spanish cities and towns. Monpazier's old market hall is intact; its 16th-century timber roof frame is supported by wooden pillars that rest on stone blocks. St Dominique's Church was built in the 13th century and added to later. Its nave, with ribbed vaults, leads to a polygonal chevet. Monpazier's 13th-century Chapter House, situated behind the church, once served as the tithe barn for stocking harvest produce requisitioned as taxes. This tithe house, as well as the town's highly organised plan and characteristic architecture, all speak physically of the fact that bastides were created from scratch as centres of power and commerce by princes.

Our visit to Montpazier is timed for the Thursday market. Walnuts are a local speciality and taste wonderfully fresh. You may wish to try the local walnut bread and tarts!

In the afternoon we take a leisurely stroll of Sarlat-la-Canéda which will include a visit to the mysterious Lanterne-des-Mortes and the cathedral, and time to view its golden stone buildings. Sarlat-la-Canéda was largely a ruinous town until purposefully restored by the French government in the 20th century to act as a cultural focus for the Périgord-Noir region. The remain of the day is at leisure (Overnight Sarlat) B

Day 11: Friday 1 October, Sarlat – Grottes de Cougnac – Labastide-Murat – Pech-Merle – Sarlat

- Grottes de Cougnac
- Lunch at Hotel La Garissade, Labastide-Murat
- Centre de Préhistoire du Pech-Merle

This morning we drive to two fascinating caves at the Grottes de Cougnac, one of which is important for its geology and the other for its fine paintings. You will see mammoth, ibex, human figures and three

megaloceros (reindeer with huge antlers). Many of the painted forms take advantage of the natural shapes of the cave wall that may possibly even have suggested them. Some of the stalagmites and stalactites in the cave were deliberately broken at the time the paintings were executed. This suggests that the paintings were to be viewed from the other side of the chamber.

After lunch at Hotel La Garissade, a charming restaurant located in the small village of Labastide-Murat, we drive to Pech-Merle, where we visit a marvelous cave, with painted black outlines of aurochs, mammoth and spotted horses. The art here has been assigned to three distinct phases. To the earliest belong images of circles, dots and the outlines of hands; this phase also includes the 'spotted horses'. The second phase includes figures made by finger-tracings on the ceiling as well as 40 black outline drawings. The last phase includes engravings, the most famous of which is a bear's head. In the late afternoon we return to Sarlat, where the evening is at leisure. (Overnight Sarlat) BL

Montignac - 3 nights

Day 12: Saturday 2 October, Sarlat – Vézac – Beynac-Cazenac – Montignac

- Market Day at Sarlat-la-Canéda
- Jardins de Marqueyssac, Vézac
- Barge excursion along the Dordogne River
- Village of Beynac-Cazenac

Saturday is market day in Sarlat-la-Canéda, which rivals Conques in the beauty of its medieval streetscapes. Our leisurely morning stroll will include participation in the market where you will be able to purchase ingredients for your picnic lunch in the gardens of Marqueyssac.

The Dordogne south of Sarlat-la-Canéda is littered with exquisite châteaux, bastides and churches. Our drive to the Château de Marqueyssac allows us to inspect this landscape more closely. Marqueyssac has extraordinary 'hanging gardens' named because of their position on a craggy promontory with breathtaking views over the surrounding valley. The château was founded in the late 17th century and has remained in the family ever since. In the 18th and 19th centuries a vast number of box trees, which lend themselves so well to topiary, were planted. Marqueyssac's boxwood folly, along with a great variety of oaks, hornbeams, lime trees, Judas trees, viburnum, plantain, elms and cypresses, shares this inimitable setting with vegetable and flower gardens, fine cliff-top bastions, sinuous paths, and a grand *allée* derived from one family member's fond memories of Italy.

We next drive to Beynac-Cazenac, a village which has managed to retain its medieval charm. The Château de Beynac, one of the great castles of the Périgord, dominates the north bank of the Dordogne River from a precipitous height and is defended on the north side by double walls. Crouching beneath its limestone cliff is a small village, once the home of poet Paul Eluard. During the Hundred Years' War, the Dordogne River frequently marked the border between French and English territories: the fortress at Beynac, then in French hands was faced on the opposite bank of the river by the Château de Castelnaud held by the English.

We shall enjoy a cruise along the Dordogne River on board replicas of traditional *gabarrs* (the Dordogne's traditional flat-bottomed boats), passing some of the valley's most beautiful castles along the way, and a local guide will provide a commentary on various aspects relating to the river, its history and its environment.

Following some time at leisure in the village of Beynac-Cazenac to wander through its narrow paved streets, we continue to Montignac where we shall reside for the next 3 nights. Montignac is dominated by a tall

tower, the vestige of a fortress that was once the home of the counts of Périgord. Until recently a sleepy backwater, Montignac was transformed when the Lascaux caves were discovered. It is now a thriving small town with attractive medieval streets and houses, a 17th-century priory church and a local folk museum. (Overnight Montignac) BD

Day 13: Sunday 3 October, Montignac – Thonac – St-Léon-sur-Vézère – Lascaux – Montignac

- Château de Losse, Thonac
- St-Léon-sur-Vézère
- Lascaux Caves II

We begin this morning with a visit to the Château de Losse. This castle owes its position, inhabited continuously since prehistory, to its strategic command of the valley. In the 13th century a Flemish family, the Loss, fortified the cliff above the river. Like so many French châteaux, it was transformed from a fortress to a country palace during the Renaissance. This was affected by Jean II de Loss who was one of François I's pages and tutor to Henry IV. We shall visit the elegant Renaissance building and its large formal garden, all with magnificent views of the valley

We then drive along the Vézère Valley up to the picturesque village of St-Léon-sur-Vézère. We return to Montignac for lunch. Here we will visit the facsimile of the world famous painted caves, Lascaux II, the original having long since been closed to the public. This is the most famous and spectacular of all decorated caves, best-known perhaps for its 600 paintings of aurochs, horses, deer and a variety of signs; there are also almost 1500 engravings in the cave. Although we cannot visit the original, it is important to see this facsimile in order to gauge the quality of this pinnacle of cave art. (Overnight Montignac) BL

Day 14: Monday 4 October, Montignac – Marquay – Eyrignac – St-Amand-de-Coly – Montignac

- Abri de Cap Blanc, Marquay
- Les Jardins du Manoir d'Eyrignac
- Saint-Amand-de-Coly: Fortified Church

This morning we head to the small village of Marquay to explore the Abri du Cap Blanc, a rock shelter that presents a large prehistoric sculpted frieze. Considered to be one of the best examples of Palaeolithic sculpture, the frieze is 13 meters long and includes carvings of horses, bison and deer.

Then we drive through lovely, often dramatic, countryside to Eyrignac, where Patrick Sermadiras de Pouzels de Lile has restored a formal 18th-century garden, a rarity in Périgord. Here, box, hornbeam and yew are clipped with an almost obsessive exactness to produce verdant architectural forms aligned along three vistas. Strong perspectives of sharply formed leafy structures are orchestrated in subtle tonal contrasts – between the fresh green of lawns, the glossy leaves of the box, the slightly translucent foliage of the hornbeam and the matt, almost black needles of the yew.

We enjoy lunch at the gardens' terrace restaurant before driving to the picturesque village of Saint-Amand-de-Coly, which has an interesting 12th-century fortified church. The small walled village of Saint-Amand-de-Coly grew up around an Augustinian monastery first mentioned in a document of 1048. A monk from the Catalan monastery of Ripoll, later bishop of Vich, who made a journey around the monasteries of Périgord, wrote the 1048 text. He recorded that the monastery had grown up around the tomb of Saint-Armand, a young Limousine noble who came here as a hermit in the middle of the 6th century from the community of Genouillac (Terrasson). Saint Armand preached to the local population, and when he died was made a saint. The day of his death was fixed as 25th June. A small town grew up around the monastery, whose houses

like the monastery itself, were constructed of Sarlaise stone, with typical lauze roofs. Little remains of the monastery and the high defensive walls that protected it and the town, but the magnificent early 12th-century fortified church remains. (Overnight Montignac) BLD

Bordeaux - 1 night

Day 15: Tuesday 5 October, Montignac – Périgueux – Pessac-sur-Dordogne – Bordeaux

- Pilgrim cathedral of Saint-Front, Périgueux
- Farewell Lunch and wine tasting at Château Carbonneau, Pessac-sur-Dordogne

Today we drive to Bordeaux via one of France's most important medieval pilgrimage centres, Périgueux. Its Cathedral of Saint-Front, although very heavily restored in the 19th century, nevertheless is particularly interesting for its medieval domes. The use of domes to roof churches in this region resembles that at St Mark's, Venice. It is typical of the ecclesiastical architecture of the Byzantine Empire rather than Western Europe. Saint-Front is actually composed of two earlier churches, separated by a high medieval bell tower.

We sample wines and eat lunch at one of the region's wineries, Château Carbonneau, located between Saint-Emilion and Bergerac. Recently awarded International Best of Wine Tourism prize, this is a corner of New Zealand in the Sainte-Foy appellation, which is between Castillon and Bergerac. Now on the third generation of New Zealand owners (with a French husband however), and a New Zealand winemaker, they produce three types of wine: red, rosé and white. The 100-hectare plus estate is also a working farm, with cattle, forest and some beautiful Bernese mountain dogs. (Overnight Bordeaux) BL

Day 16: Wednesday 6 October, Bordeaux. Tour Ends.

- Airport transfer for participants departing on the ASA 'designated' flight

Our tour ends today in Bordeaux. Participants departing on the ASA 'designated' flight will be included in the group transfer to Bordeaux airport. Participants wishing to extend their stay in France and Europe are advised to contact ASA for further information. **B**

Accommodation

16-day Cultural Tour of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne

ASA has selected 3- to 4-star hotels that are themselves historical buildings and/or are located in historical centres. All hotels provide rooms with en suite bathroom. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

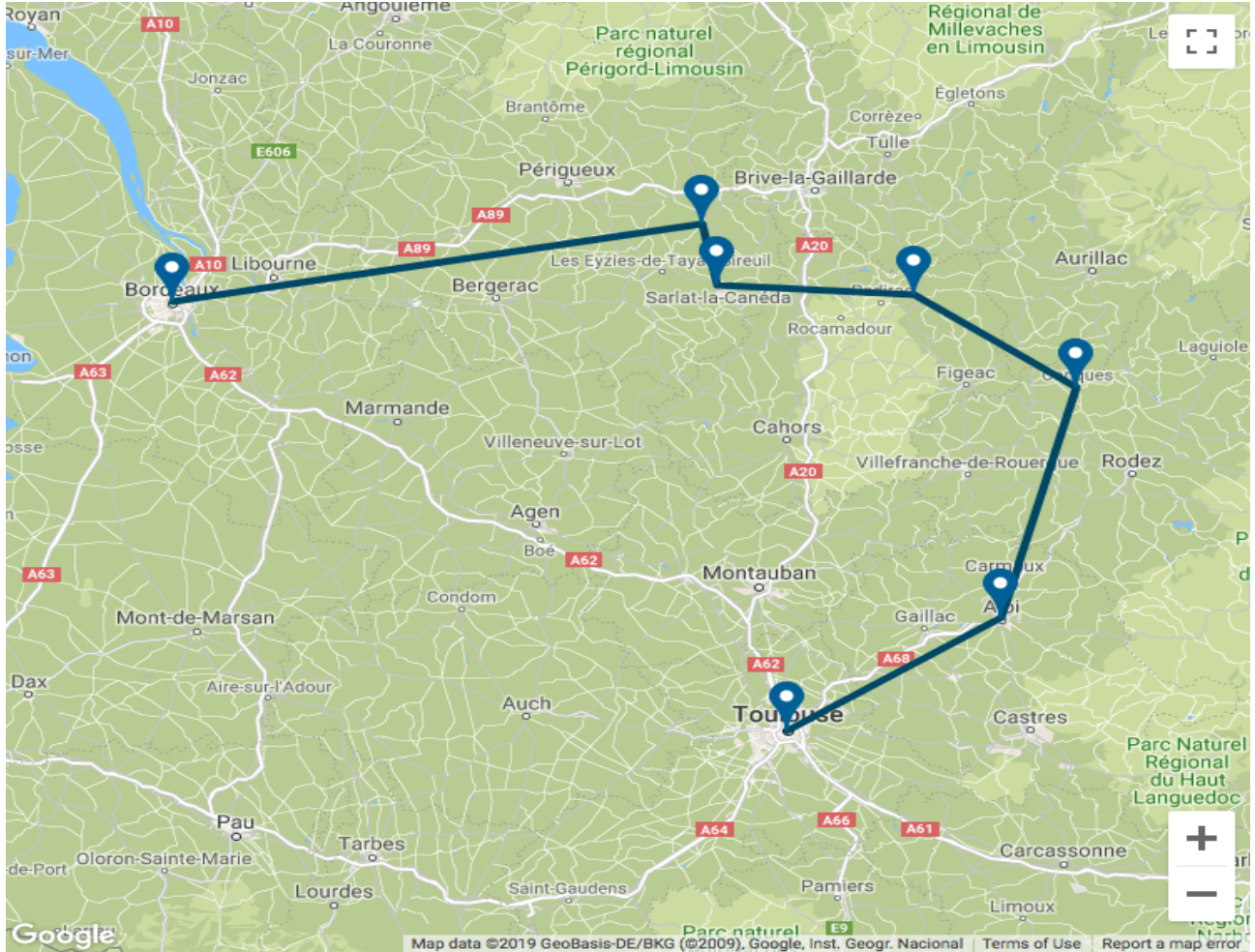
- Toulouse (2 nights): 4-star Grand Hôtel de L'Opéra – a charming 4-star hotel housed in a beautifully restored 17th-century convent, located in the heart of Toulouse, opposite the theatre www.grand-hotel-opera.com
- Albi (3 nights): 4-star Mercure Albi Bastides – housed in former 18th-century flour mill, located on the banks of the Tarn, in the city centre. The hotel features a restaurant and terrace overlooking the river www.mercure.com
- Conques (1 night): 4-star Hôtel Sainte-Foy – housed in a beautiful 17th-century residence located in the village centre, opposite Conques' abbey church hotelsaintefoy.com
- Saint-Jean-Lespinasse (1 night): 3-star Les Trois Soleils de Montal – a modern hotel set in a four-hectare park, located near the Château of Montal and only a short drive from the market town of Saint-Céré www.3soleils.fr
- Sarlat (4 nights): 4-star Hôtel Plaza Madeleine – a charming hotel in the heart of the historical centre of Sarlat www.plaza-madeleine.com
- Montignac (3 nights): 3-star Hôtel La Roseraie – housed in a 19th-century mansion by the river Vézère; surrounded by a centennial rose garden www.laroseraie-hotel.com
- Bordeaux (1 night): 4-star Hôtel de Sèze Bordeaux – located in the heart of Bordeaux at the corner of the Allées de Tourny and rue de Sèze, in a beautiful 18th-century building. www.hotel-de-seze.com

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

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a single occupancy throughout the tour. In all hotels on this tour, this will be a double/twin room for single occupancy, except for 1 night in Conques, where, due to the size of the hotel, standard single rooms may be provided. The number of rooms available for single use is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 September 2020

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only

AUD \$TBA Single Supplement

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

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3- to 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 on arrival and departure
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Entrance fees
- 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-Toulouse, Bordeaux-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance



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 16-day Cultural Tour of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne involves:](#)

- Visiting a range of hill-top towns on foot, involving walks uphill from bus parks to historic town centres and other sites. The terrain is often uneven, and many of the streets are cobbled.
- Walking on uneven and sometimes slippery ground during visits to the caves. It can get quite humid inside the caves.
- A moderate amount of walking and standing daily during museum and other site visits.
- A daily schedule with several early-morning departures (8.00-8.30am), concluding in the late afternoon (6.00-6.30pm).
- The use of audio headsets which amplify the voice of your guide (despite noisy surroundings). This technology also allows you to move freely during site visits without missing any information.
- 3- to 4-star hotels with six hotel changes.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel portage 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

Making a Tentative Reservation before the tour price has been published

ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD \$100.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD \$400.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of AUD \$500.00 is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD \$100.00 per person deposit, less a \$33.00 service fee (including GST).

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. ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities without assistance or support:-

- walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs

- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15-20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double (or twin) room for single occupancy throughout the tour, except for 1 night in Conques, where, due to the size of the hotel, standard single rooms may be provided. 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.



Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

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OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$100.00 per person deposit, less a \$33.00 service fee (including GST).

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

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 _____

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- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature _____

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

Payment by (please indicate): Cheque Direct Debit (see below) Credit Card (see below)

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

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 2%
 American Express 2%

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
