




Cultural Landscapes of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne 2027

14 SEP – 29 SEP 2027

Code: 22733

Tour Leaders **Romain Nugou, Adrian Mialet**

Fitness Level 

Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

Visit medieval towns, Templar commanderies, pilgrim churches, local markets, Renaissance châteaux & gardens; in Dordogne's picturesque valleys, view spectacular prehistoric cave paintings.

Overview

This tour, led by [Romain Nugou](#) and [Adrian Mialet](#), who joins us in Sarlat, 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.

- Tour through one of the most scenic and dramatic regions of France, dominated by the lovely river valleys of the Lot, Tarn and Dordogne.
- Discover the unique history of the Cathars and the Albigensian Crusade through the medieval heritage of Toulouse, [Carcassonne](#) and Albi.
- Visit some of the grandest pilgrim churches at Toulouse, Moissac, Conques, Rocamadour and Périgueux, built on the great medieval pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela.
- On the Larzac plateau, explore the Templar and Hospitaller territories and their Commanderies, monastic farms supporting their war effort in the Holy Land.
- In Rodez, discover the artistic world of [Pierre Soulages](#) 'the painter of black and light'.
- Delve into the medieval world and visit its unique frontier towns, *bastides*, such as Cordes-sur-Ciel and Monpazier; visit châteaux that were once medieval fortresses but later became majestic palaces surrounded by fine gardens.
- Visit Cro-Magnon era sites in the Vézère valley, where Homo sapiens was first identified, including the large prehistoric sculpted frieze at [Abri de Cap Blanc](#).
- See the spectacular cave paintings of the Upper Paleolithic in the caves of Rouffignac, Cougnac, Pech-Merle and Lascaux II facsimile.
- Amble through the weekly village markets and taste the famous Périgord delicacies.
- 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.
- Limited to 18 participants.

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

Cultural Landscapes of the Midi-Pyrénées & the Dordogne: Introduction by ASA tour leader Romain Nugou

<https://youtu.be/Qk8LPedP0vY>

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.

Leaders



Romain Nugou

Romain holds a Masters of Arts degree in European history from the University of Toulouse. He also graduated in geography and economics. A native French speaker and an insatiable traveller, he joined ASA in 2018 and leads tours to France.

Born and raised in the mountainous region of Auvergne in Central France, Romain's passion for history blossomed early. He studied at the University of Toulouse, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in 2003, specialising in history, geography, and economic history. This foundation led him to pursue a Master of Arts in Contemporary European and Italian History, culminating in a thesis exploring the plight of Italian exiles in France during the Fascist period.

Romain's insatiable curiosity and thirst for knowledge extend beyond the confines of academia. A trilingual scholar fluent in French, English, and Spanish (with a grounding in Italian), he has travelled extensively, lived, and worked in diverse locations, including South America and New Caledonia, before settling in Melbourne, which he now calls home. Romain joined ASA in 2018 and leads a number of ASA's tours to Southern France.



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.

Adrian studied history and art history at the University of Toulouse, and has a particular passion for prehistory. He also trained as a National Guide and is fluent in English, French and Spanish. He has worked for many years at the replica of the famous cave Lascaux II as well as other prehistoric sites including Cap Blanc, Font de Gaume, and Combarelles. For over ten years Adrian has led ASA tours to the Midi-Pyrénées and Dordogne. He also leads tours for other organisations including the National Geographic, Smithsonian Travel, and the Natural History Museum of New York. Adrian has narrated a beautiful video documentary entitled *The Dordogne Valley: A Journey Through the Perigord Noir*.

Combine this tour with

Art, History and Landscapes of Burgundy and Alsace 2027
30 SEP – 15 OCT 2027

Between Sea and Sky: Homer's Greek Islands 2027
1 OCT – 21 OCT 2027

Great Libraries and Stately Homes of England 2027
5 OCT – 19 OCT 2027

Sardinia and Corsica: Islands of Forgotten Riches 2027
30 SEP – 17 OCT 2027



Itinerary

This itinerary lists a range of sites which we plan to visit, some of which require special permission and therefore 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 to accommodate alterations in opening hours and confirmation of private visits. Meals included in the tour price are indicated where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner.

Toulouse - 2 nights

Day 1: Tuesday 14 September, Arrive Toulouse

- Tour commences at 2.30pm in the foyer of the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra
- Welcome meeting
- Orientation Walk
- Basilica Saint-Sernin, Toulouse
- Welcome Dinner at Brasserie Le Bibent

Meeting Point: The tour commences at 2.30pm in the foyer of the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra situated in the centre of Toulouse.

We commence with a short welcome meeting which will be followed by an orientation walk visiting 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 have aisles running down either side of the nave and a deambulatory allowing pilgrims to process through the building to see the relics without disrupting services. 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.

We meet again later in the afternoon for a presentation with pre-dinner drinks before enjoying our welcome dinner at Le Bibent, a historic brasserie with an opulent interior. (Overnight Toulouse) D

Day 2: Wednesday 15 September, Toulouse – Carcassonne – Toulouse

- Cité de Carcassonne: Château Comtal and Ramparts
- Basilica of St Nazaire and St Celse, Carcassonne
- Evening performance [Piano aux Jacobins](#) (subject to performance schedule)

Today we drive southwest to what was once the medieval frontier between the Kingdom of France and the Spanish kingdom of Aragón, to the walled city of Carcassonne. Before its integration into the French kingdom by Louis IX in 1247, Carcassonne was the stronghold of the Trencavel family, a local viscount either allied 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 in 1248, and even after it had lost importance as a bastion against Aragón (when the frontier moved further south in 1659) its towers and ramparts made the upper city almost impregnable. During the Hundred Years' War, the Black Prince destroyed the lower city but could not take Carcassonne proper (1355).

Carcassonne slowly declined to provincial obscurity and its walls fell into such ruin that in the 19th century the French government considered dismantling them. Under the influence of the writer Prosper Mérimée, France's first inspector of ancient monuments, the city was restored in the 1850s and 1860s by the great Neo-Gothic architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. 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, 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), 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 before return to Toulouse mid-afternoon.

Our day concludes with an evening performance of music in the cloister of the Jacobins church. *Piano aux Jacobins* is a piano festival, created in 1979, that takes place every year throughout the month of September in Toulouse. A renowned meeting place on the French and international music scene, *Piano aux Jacobins* invites the public every year to discover young artists and hear the great names of the piano. (Overnight Toulouse) B

Albi - 3 nights

Day 3: Thursday 16 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 'Les 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. The museum now holds a comprehensive collection of Romanesque and Gothic sculpture from the city's churches.

After some time at leisure for lunch in Toulouse, 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) B

Day 4: Friday 17 September, Albi

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

We spend the full day in Albi, a city of red brick, standing 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. The Papacy, and later the French monarchs, mounted the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229) to destroy the so-called Cathar 'heresy' and assert its power on the local authorities and clergy. Ultimately the county was incorporated into the French realm, in 1271. In Albi, Bishop Bernard de Castanet started the construction the new Cathedral of Sainte-Cécile in 1282. The building, with huge, smooth defensive walls and curved tower buttresses 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 18 September, Albi – Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon – La Cavalerie – La Couvertoirade – Millau Viaduct – Albi

- Templar and Hospitaller Circuit on the Larzac Plateau
- 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 Knights Templar, originally dedicated to the succour of pilgrims in Jerusalem, became a powerful force in medieval Europe, amassing vast wealth that raised the jealousy of kings. The Templars 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 the 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 1158, and then taken over by the

Hospitallers when the Order was disbanded in 1312. La Couvertoirade, in a wildly beautiful setting, deep in the Larzac, 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 one of the tallest bridges in the world. (Overnight Albi) BL

Conques - 1 night

Day 6: Sunday 19 September, Albi – Cordes-sur-Ciel – Rodez – Conques

- Bastide of Cordes-sur-Ciel
- Musée Pierre Soulages, Rodez

Today we drive north to the secluded town of Conques through the region of the Aveyron Gorges. Bastides, a fortified village or town of regular plan created *ex nihilo*, played a vital role in the consolidation of royal power after the Albigensian Crusade. Originally conceived to resettle and shelter people who had been displaced by the Albigensian Crusade, they were also intended to encourage agricultural and related market development. The territorial struggles between the Plantagenet and French monarchies favoured the construction of bastides. The bastides were therefore the 'frontier towns' or 'colonies' of the time, 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, often described as the earliest bastide, does not conform to type. Its organic plan accommodated the urban fabric to the steep bluff upon which it was located.

We then head west to Rodez, today's prefecture of the Aveyron department, where we visit the Musée Soulages. [Pierre Soulages](#) was a French painter, printmaker, and sculptor born in Rodez. He was arguably the most famous French artist of the second half of the 20th century. His works are held by leading museums around the world, including the one we visit today. Soulages is known as "the painter of black", owing to his interest in the colour as both a colour and a non-colour. He saw light as a work material; the striations of the black surface of his paintings enable him to reflect light, allowing the black to come out of darkness and into brightness, thus becoming a luminous colour. Soulages produced 104 stained-glass windows for the Romanesque Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy in Conques from 1987 to 1994, which we will see tomorrow.

We then drive north 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) BLD

Saint-Jean-Lespinasse - 1 night

Day 7: Monday 20 September, Conques – Montal – Saint-Jean-Lespinasse

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

Conques owes its fame to the 11th century Benedictine Abbey of Sainte-Foy. Its tympanum depicting the *Last Judgement* is widely considered the most beautiful in France. The abbey was first founded in 866 in a lonely, thickly wooded region, and became an important station on the *Via Podiensis*, the route to Santiago de Compostela from Le Puy, because of the extraordinary popularity of the saint, martyred in 330 CE, whose relics were brought here in five centuries later. The adolescent girl Sainte Foy 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. 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 21 September, Saint-Jean-Lespinasse – Autoire – Carennac – Loubressac – Rocamadour – Sarlat

- Village of Autoire
- Village of Loubressac
- Carennac Church & Cloister
- Clifftop village of Rocamadour and its sanctuary

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 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.

After lunch, we continue on to Sarlat-la-Canéda. On the way, we stop in the clifftop village of Rocamadour. Nestled in a gorge above a tributary of the river Dordogne, this village is known for its sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which for centuries has attracted pilgrims from many countries, among them kings, bishops, and nobles. Accessed via the Grand Escalier staircase, it includes the Chapelle Notre-Dame, with its Black Madonna statue, and the Romanesque-Gothic Basilica of St-Sauveur. If you pay attention, you will

see, embedded in the rock, a sword identified by the monks with the famous *Durandal*, the sword of Roland, the legendary paladin and partially historical officer of Charlemagne in French epic literature. (Overnight Sarlat) BL

Day 9: Wednesday 22 September, Sarlat – Les Eyzies de Tayac – Rouffignac – Sarlat

- Musée National de la Préhistoire, Les Eyzies
- Abri Pataud, Les Eyzies (to be confirmed in 2027)
- Prehistoric cave of Rouffignac

Adrian joins us today for the rest of the tour.

For over a century the Dordogne has been celebrated for its magnificent painted caves from the Upper Palaeolithic (40,000-10,000 BCE). 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 BCE 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.

Our introduction to Prehistory is done at 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.

After lunch we visit Rouffignac, a vast prehistoric cave which includes ten kilometres of galleries, two of which were frequented by Cro-Magnon artists. An electrical train takes us through. It's also exceptional for its more than 150 depictions of mammoths. 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 23 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 often 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.

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 with a symmetrical and gridded plan. 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 with its old market hall still intact. Our visit to Montpazier is timed to coincide with the Thursday market.

In the afternoon we take a leisurely stroll of Sarlat-la-Canéda which will include a visit to the mysterious Lanterne des Morts 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 remainder of the day is at leisure. (Overnight Sarlat) B

Day 11: Friday 24 September, Sarlat – Grottes de Cougnac – Cabrerets – Pech-Merle – Sarlat

- Grottes de Cougnac
- Lunch at Restaurant La Roue, Cabrerets
- 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 in the small village of Cabrerets, we drive to Pech-Merle, where we visit a marvellous 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 25 September, Sarlat – Vézac – Beynac-Cazenac – Montignac

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

Saturday is market day in Sarlat-la-Canéda; 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 immerse ourselves in this landscape. 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 *gabarres* (the Dordogne's traditional flat-bottomed boats), passing some of the valley's most beautiful castles along the way. We then wander through the narrow paved streets of the village of Beynac-Cazenac and visit the castle before continuing to Montignac, where we shall reside for the next 3 nights. (Overnight Montignac) BD

Day 13: Sunday 26 September, Montignac – Lascaux – St-Léon-sur-Vézère – Thonac – Montignac

- Walking tour of Montignac
- Lascaux Caves II
- St-Léon-sur-Vézère
- Château de Losse, Thonac

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.

Next, 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.

We then drive along the Vézère Valley for a visit to the picturesque village of St-Léon-sur-Vézère. Here we may view a number of houses which still retain their traditional *lauze* (stone) roofing, and the Romanesque Church of Saint-Léonce which features some fine frescoes.

This afternoon we visit 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 Losse, 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. (Overnight Montignac) BL

Day 14: Monday 27 September, 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 de 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. 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. A small town grew up around the monastery, whose houses like the monastery itself, were constructed of Sarladaise 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 28 September, Montignac – Périgueux – Pessac-sur-Dordogne – Bordeaux

- Walking tour of *Vesunna*, the Gallo-Roman town of Périgueux
- Pilgrim cathedral of Saint-Front, Périgueux
- Farewell Lunch and wine tasting at Château Carbonneau, Pessac-sur-Dordogne

Today we drive to Bordeaux via Périgueux, once an important medieval pilgrimage centres. We start with a walking tour of *Vesunna*, the antique town, founded around 16 BCE when the province of *Gallia Aquitania* was established by Augustus. Around 40 BCE, the town already had a forum and the amphitheatre was under construction. The temple, known today as the 'Tour de Vésone' soaring in the museum's park, dates back to the beginning of the 2nd century.

The 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 Château Carbonneau, located between Saint-Emilion and Bergerac. This winery is a corner of New Zealand in the Sainte-Foy appellation. They produce elegant red, rosé and white wines that reflect the exceptional terroir of the Sainte-Foy Côtes de Bordeaux Appellation. The 100-hectare plus estate is also a working farm. (Overnight Bordeaux) BL

Day 16: Wednesday 29 September, Bordeaux. Tour Ends.

- Tour concludes in the morning
- At leisure/Check out

Our tour ends in Bordeaux after breakfast. In the morning you will be required to check out of the hotel. Please contact ASA if you require assistance with a transfer to Bordeaux Airport. B

Accommodation

ASA has selected 3- and 4-star hotels that are themselves historical buildings and/or are located in historical centres.

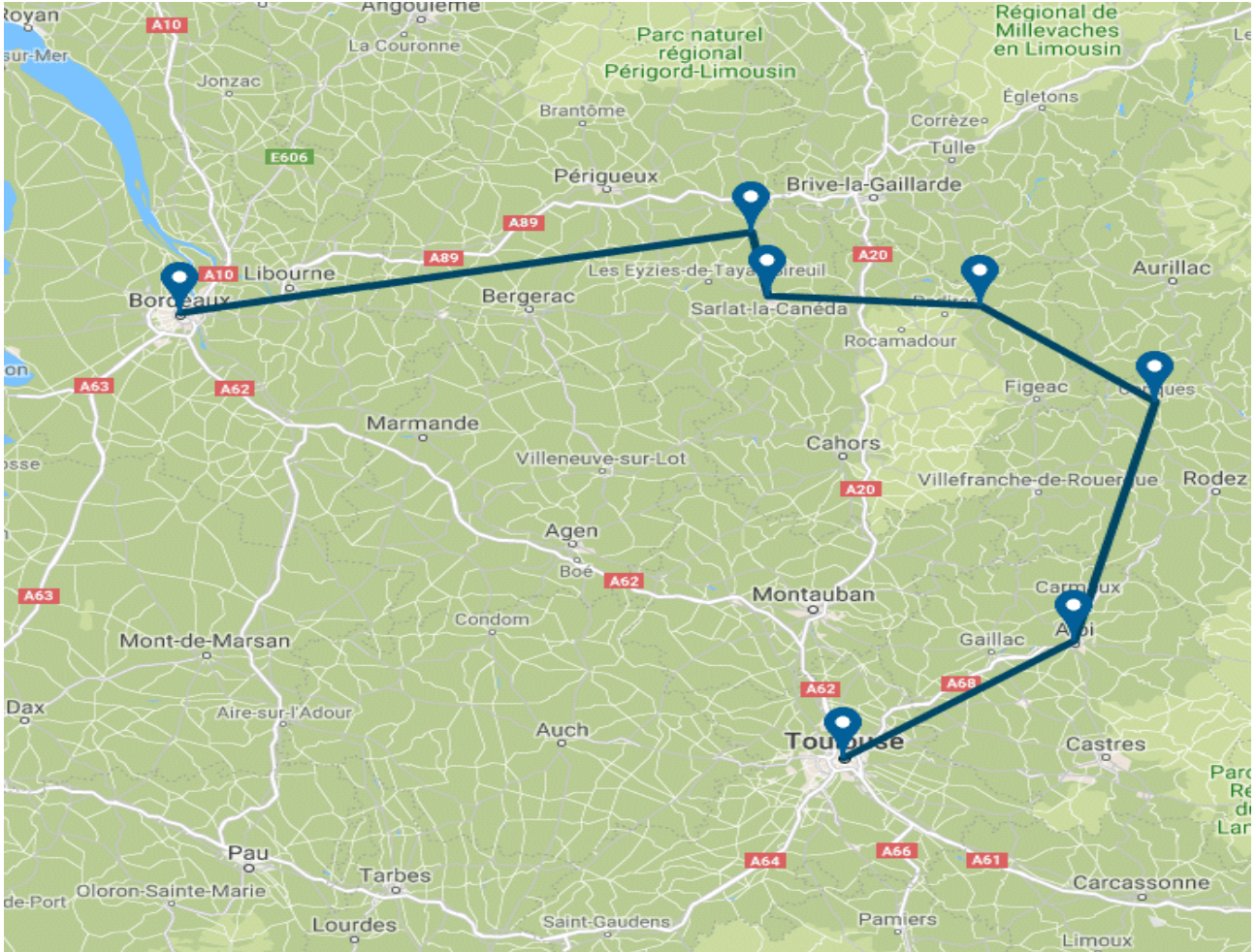
- Toulouse (2 nights): [Grand Hôtel de L'Opéra](#) – beautifully restored 17th c. convent
- Albi (3 nights): [Mercure Albi Rives du Tarn](#) – former 18th c. mill located on the banks of the Tarn
- Conques (1 night): [Hôtel Sainte-Foy](#) – 17th-century residence opposite Conques' abbey church
- Saint-Jean-Lespinasse (1 night): [Les Trois Soleils de Montal](#) – set in a four-hectare park near the Château of Montal
- Sarlat (4 nights): [Plaza Madeleine](#) – in the heart of the historical centre of Sarlat
- Montignac (3 nights): [La Roseraie](#) – 19th c. mansion by the Vézère with a centennial rose garden
- Bordeaux (1 night): [Hôtel de Sèze](#) – in the heart of Bordeaux in a beautiful 18th-century building

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 \$11,990.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 September 2026

AUD \$12,390.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$1560.00 Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3- and 4-star hotels
- Meals as indicated in the tour itinerary, where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels where available (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Entrance fees
- Tour handbook
- 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
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance



Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level 

Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to six hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace on flat or undulating terrain; a few days include steep ascents/descents to hilltop towns.
- negotiate challenging historic sites with several flights of stairs eg ramparts of Carcassonne.
- negotiate challenging prehistoric caves which may include poor lighting, steep and uneven stairs, narrow paths, uneven terrain and wet surfaces.
- manage your own luggage at some hotels.

Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

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. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

Booking Conditions

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 \$1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.



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

Covid Certificate A copy of my current international certificate enclosed

Travel Plans

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.

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. **You must also be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.** 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. You do NOT 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 the inherent dangers, risks and uncertainties in travel and those beyond ASA's control and understand they may occur before or 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 only for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services associated with 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 booking, preparing for, travelling to, on and from or cancelling any tour.

I release and indemnify ASA with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of preparing for, 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 preparing for, 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; and
 - d. any event or happening beyond ASA's control
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of any tour, part of a tour or of my continued participation on a tour for any reason (subject to ASA's refund conditions below).

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, services, terms and conditions. If a service provider cancels or does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, and does not give a refund, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

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

ASA's liability in respect of any tour cancelled or changed will be limited to the partial refund of amounts you have paid, less an administration fee of \$500 and other costs and charges of third party service providers. No compensation will be payable to you by ASA where ASA cancels or changes a tour, or any part of a tour.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate and in the best interests of health, safety and wellbeing of tour participants. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A non-refundable deposit of \$1000.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: your initial deposit of \$1000.00 is non-refundable.**

75-31 days prior 50% of total amount due

30-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

**\$500.00 of this amount (ie 50% of your deposit) 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 or services 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. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to 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) _____

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 & 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 _____