

# THE WALKING PARTY

## ITINERARY FOR THE DORDOGNE QUERCY

Price: 2890 euros per person      Single supplement : 360 euros

Distance: 60km

Walking: moderate to easy



*“In May this countryside is full of earthly delights of new-mown scents and nightingale valleys, filled with the purring of turtledoves and fields so full of wild orchids that you can hardly walk without treading on them.”* Brian Jackman, Daily Telegraph

James and Diana Tamlyn moved to their 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse in France 15 years ago, enthused by the romance and beauty of the area. James’ love of the flora and fauna, their combined fascination for the food, wine and local traditions and personal contacts make the week a special experience that you could not enjoy as an individual traveller.

The Dordogne is so well known throughout the world for its spectacular caves and scenery and gastronomy. We will be doing justice to this fame. You will visit the newly opened Lascaux IV and the gardens of Marqueyssac and stay in a lovely hotel of the region.

The area of south west France, known as the ‘Quercy’, is less famous but all the more beautiful with its calm limestone pastures and lofty Lombardy poplar valleys. It was given by Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henri d’Anjou in 1152, two years before he became Henry II of England, and its beauty and timelessness has changed little since. Not only that but it is still known today as being the gastronomic heart of France.

**Day 1 ARRIVAL** After meeting up with James and the rest of the group at Toulouse airport you will be driven up to the Dordogne stopping for lunch next to the beautiful abbey of Moissac. Sir Kenneth Clark was here for his ground breaking television series *Civilisation* and he eulogised the doorway that we will look at after lunch. It is a stone masterpiece of asymmetry and beauty. After lunch we continue to your chateau. This is a charming chateau set in the heart of the Dordogne and close to one of the great vineyards of the area. Not only are the bedrooms beautiful and spacious but they all have fireplaces with roaring fires and it is a wonderful opportunity for us to be here. Hélène too is one of the great cooks of the area so this is a great way to start the Dordogne Quercy week. Your first three nights are spent here. There is a swimming pool.

**Day 2 SAUSSIGNAC** Your first French breakfast at the table laden with croissants and fruit and hot coffee. We set off for a walk to a most beautiful chateau near the village of Saussignac. Picnic in the vineyard *plein aire* with Diana and lots of lovely local fresh food. Then we set off for Clos

d'Yvigne. We will walk from here through the beautiful Bergerac vineyards to the house and vineyard of Richard Doughty. It is thanks really to Richard's efforts that Saussignac exists as an appellation. His '*Coup de Coeur*' has been compared by Robert Parker to 75% d'Yquem and 25% Climens! From here we will walk to Saussignac through a prune drying farm and then return to the chateau by car. Dinner at the chateau. *Walk: 7km a.m. and 4km p.m.*

**Day 3 PRE-HISTORY, GARDENS AND CHATEAUX** After a classic French breakfast we depart for the newly designed Lascaux IV. This is an extraordinary feat of French savoir faire to recreate the whole cave of Lascaux. It opened this year. This is probably the most important pre-historic cave and is referred to as the Sistine Chapel of stone age man. It takes you back to the beginning of our time in Europe and is an awe inspiring start to the day! We will then continue to Sarlat for lunch. This is probably the most beautiful town of the Dordogne and on the list to be nominated as a World Heritage site. Its deep yellow stone and *lauzes* roofed Renaissance merchants houses, rich with mullion windows, dominate the cobbled streets. It is also famed for its gastronomy and the shops teem with duck produce and meats and vegetables in such a great setting. In the afternoon we will drive to the Chateau of Castelnaud. From here we will walk across the valley surrounded by towering chateaux to the stunning gardens of Marqueyssac. These gardens rest along a ridge dominating the river Dordogne and date back to the seventeenth century. As well as its outstanding position, it contains some of the most extraordinary asymmetrical topiary. From here you see the most fabulous Dordognais scenery of towering castles and small river ports. After your walk around the gardens we return to Chateau des Baudry. Dinner at the chateau.

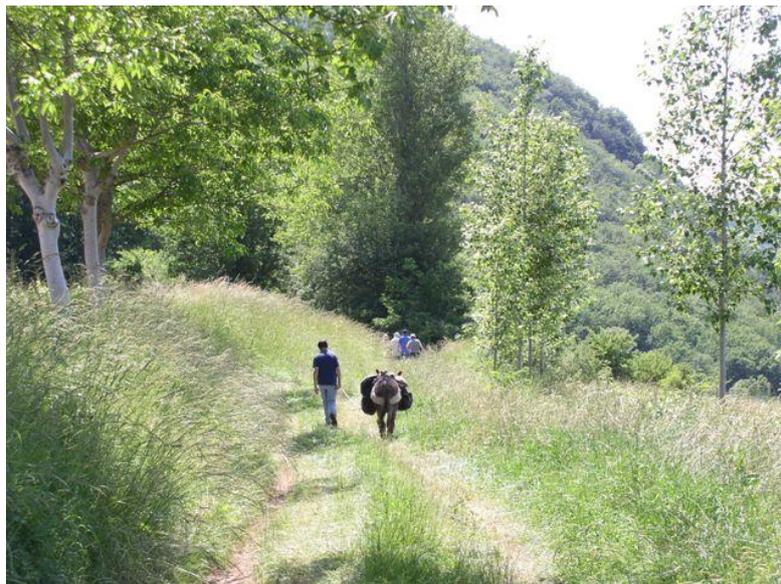
*Walk : 5km*



**Day 4 BASTIDES** We leave by car for a walk through the chestnut woods and pastures to the twelfth century bastide of Monpazier founded by our Edward 1<sup>st</sup> in 1284. This is probably the loveliest of all bastides and we will lunch beneath the perfectly proportioned arcades of the Place des Cornières. The bastides were built in the twelfth century and were a formidable piece of town planning which allowed the individual his rights in such dark times and was the very start of the rise of the merchant class. In the afternoon we will continue by foot through the oak woods towards another historical masterpiece - Chateau Biron. An extraordinary mass of architecture through the ages. An ice cold beer or a cup of tea then before driving south to your next charming place to stay. This is a charming country manor house. You will be here for your next four nights. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite. There is a swimming pool. Dinner at the hotel. *Walk : 9km*

**Day 5 CASTLE** A drive in the morning to Château Chambert. We set off by foot, with the donkeys and full kit and Daniel, for stunning views over the valleys of Jurassic limestone. We will pass through vineyards and tiny villages before arriving for a leisurely picnic with Diana beneath the shade of the orchard trees of Mademoiselle Goul. After lunch we visit the mighty honey-coloured castle of Bonaguil. This was a castle much admired by T. E. Lawrence. Most of it was built in the sixteenth century by Baron Berenger de Roquefeuil. We will then rejoin the vehicles to return to Lario. Dinner at the Manor House. *Walk: 12km*

**Day 6 LAVENDER AND ORCHIDS** After breakfast we will drive back to St Matré and start our walk towards a local privately owned chateau where we will have a picnic again with Diana. We will walk through undulating pastures before arriving at a lavender distillery. We can talk about the making of lavender oil and its sad fate in the Quercy as this one is now extinct. We will then carry on to our chateau for lunch. This is a charming small chateau and is owned by one of the oldest families of the Quercy. After lunch we drive to the manor house. This is a charming Quercy manor house where you will stay your last two nights. You have one of the best chefs of the region here. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite. You will visit a small fifteenth century fresco-painted church before arriving in time to relax before dinner. *Walk: 12km*



**Day 7 CAHORS VINEYARD** A drive to the village of St Vincent Rives d'Olt on the banks of the river Lot. We set off along the river with the donkeys again for the first part of the morning catching glimpses of loping herons and other river bird life before we move on up through the woods where wild boar roam in plenty. We will arrive at the little port of Albas to be picked up and driven to a local village for lunch. The Maitre d' here insists that wine is much better for you than water. A drive then to visit one of the best Cahors vineyards. This is a serious affair and we hope the owner will give us a tour and tasting of his excellent and incredible selection of wines. Return to your manor house by car to relax before our farewell dinner. *Walk : 12km*

**Day 8** You leave in the morning for Toulouse airport

**NOTE:** *The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate.*