

# Itinerary-Truffle Hop

## The Truffle Hop : Day 1

Bonjour!

You arrive at Toulouse airport in the evening to be met by James. We drive to a charming, Quercy stone manor house situated in the middle of the rolling Quercy countryside. All rooms have bathrooms en suite. It is a most lovely and relaxing place to stay. The bedrooms are spacious and simply decorated with beautiful views. The garden surrounds the house with lofty trees and flowers. The owner is an excellent chef, hence another reason for being here! He will cook us dinner as we sit in front of a roaring fire drinking aperitifs and enjoying the weekend off.

## The Truffle Hop : Day 2

You are greeted in the morning by a table laden with croissants, pains chocolats, jams, fresh fruit juice, fruits and strong, black coffee. Then we set off in the cars to start a good walk to market day in a medieval village. You breathe in the fresh French air and build up our appetites for an excellent lunch at a local auberge in the village. After lunch a further walk in the beauty of the Quercy Blanc before returning to the manor house passing by a pretty, fourteenth century, frescoed church to learn about the seven deadly sins. We finish the day with an excellent truffle dinner in front of the fire. Bernard the chef is probably one of the best chefs of the region and he will also be cooking crepes suzette. This is a rare treat as the chef never has the time to cook at the table but we are there off season so we gain this privilege! Walk 7 miles

## The Truffle Hop : Day 3

'Cook the truffle'

More croissants and breakfast delights before a drive to Lario, the home of James and Diana. Here we can all cook in the kitchen and see how one can work with the truffle. 'Poule en demi-deuil' is a wonderful treat with a proper farm chicken and vegetables fresh from the Sunday market. We will make tiny cabbages stuffed with breadcrumbs, truffle and bacon. Here we will also use the frozen truffle which is the best way to preserve the fungus. This gives you the opportunity to see and handle the difference between the fresh and the preserved. You will also make your own truffled foie gras which you can then take home with you! This has to be one of the gastronomic kings! After lunch we have a pretty walk before returning to Lario. From here we drive to an excellent vineyard. This is an important Cahors vineyard and the family have been making wine here since 1830 which includes today a Black Wine, where the grapes are 'cooked' in prune-drying ovens, and a beautiful sweet white made from Chenin Blanc grapes. We return in the vehicles to the manor house for more delicious French cuisine from the chef. Once again a warm, crackling fire. Once again delicious wine. And once again a well-earned, cosy bed. Walk: 5 miles

## The Truffle Hop : Day 4

'Buy the truffle' and 'Hunt the truffle'

A coffee and a small walk to a local church to build up an appetite for the great seven-course brunch of Bernard Philippe. This is a real treat as each course is carefully truffled to give you a morning tingle before setting off after the brunch for the rural and world-famous truffle market at Lalbenque. It is indeed a gloriously rustic and remarkably unique and simple affair. You will never get a better collection of pure-bred, rustic types, beret-clad and ruddy-faced! And here is a chance to buy some real fresh truffle to take back home to England. A decent truffle should cost around 70 euros depending on the August rains. That would come out at about 1000 euros a kilo! After the market we leave Lalbenque by car for a truffle hunt with a dear old lady and her friendly pig. It is a rare event to find a truffle pig these days as most truffle hunters use dogs. If there is time after this we may try for a cup of tea at the most beautiful chateau in the area. It is a chateau we particularly love and which we stay in during our Haut Quercy week. From here we drive back to our manor house for the last night dinner.

## The Truffle Hop : Day 5

Au revoir!

After breakfast we drive to Cahors for the market that takes place in front of the Gothic cathedral. It is a lovely market and gives you time to buy some last minute things to take back home with you. We will lunch in Cahors in one of our

favourite restaurants before driving to Moissac to look at the fabulous Romanesque abbey that Sir Kenneth Clark eulogised in his great BBC series 'Civilisation'. A quick visit inside the abbey before we drive to Toulouse Blagnac.