

THE WALKING PARTY

ITINERARY FOR THE DORDOGNE QUERCY

Dates: 26th May – 1st June

Price: 2690 euros per person Single supplement : 360 euros

Distance: 60 km

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 Tamlyn moved to his 18th century farmhouse in France 15 years ago, enthused by the romance and beauty of the area. James’ love of the flora and fauna, combined with his 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 Lascaux II 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 towards the bastide of Domme set on a hill overlooking the river Dordogne. Here you will stay in a charming house set just within the village walls. It is immaculately run by Francois and Helene Passebon with a beautiful garden bursting with bloom. Helene is one of my favourite cooks and we shall eat dinner here one night. All rooms are beautifully decorated and with bathrooms en suite. Your first three nights are spent here. There is a hot tub!

Day 2 MARQUEYSSAC Your first French breakfast at the table laden with croissants and fruit and hot coffee. Then we set off on foot for the gardens of Marqueyssac. The Dordogne valley here is exceptionally picturesque with chateau dotted everywhere and Lombardy poplars and walnut trees in abundance. After visiting the gardens and lunching at the chateau we shall continue on foot

to the enchanting village of La Roque Gageac nestled into the cliffs on the river. We shall drive from here back to Domme. Dinner in Domme. *Walk: 9km a.m. and 4km p.m.*

Day 3 PRE-HISTORY, SARLAT and WALNUT MILL After a classic French breakfast we depart for the great cave of Lascaux II. This is probably the most important pre-historic cave and 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! After the visit to Lascaux II. We will then walk towards a beautiful chateau for a picnic lunch with beautiful views. After lunch we will drive to Sarlat for a shopping time and an opportunity to see the beauty of this Renaissance Dordogne masterpiece. 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. From here we will visit an ancient, but still active, walnut mill to see how the cogs turn and produce such delicious oil. A walk then across the valley back to Domme. Dinner in Domme. *Walk : 7km + 6km in the afternoon.*



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 1st 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 a village in the Quercy Blanc region. Here you stay in a charming country manor house. You will be here for your next three 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 for stunning views over the valleys of Jurassic limestone. We will pass through vineyards and tiny villages before arriving in a tiny village for a delicious café lunch. 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 the manor house. Dinner at your hotel. *Walk: 9km*

Day 6 LAVENDER AND ORCHIDS After breakfast we will drive back to St Matré and start our walk towards James's house set up on a small hill with beautiful views where we will have lunch with delicious local market produce. 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 James's house for lunch. After lunch we drive to the manor house. You will visit a small fifteenth century fresco-painted church before arriving in time to relax before dinner. *Walk: 12km*



Day 7 You leave in the morning for Toulouse airport

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