



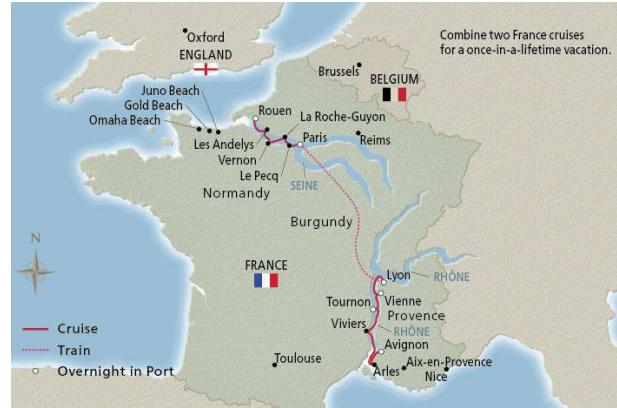
# France's Finest

## THE VIKING SAVINGS EVENT

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Bravo Travel Int



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## Day 1 — Paris, France

Embark your ship and settle into your stateroom. Long a hub of French culture and cuisine, Paris is one of the most romantic destinations in the world. Over the centuries, Parisian culture has been built on the wings of inspiration. Music, film, architecture, literature, dance and the visual arts all have their brilliant place in the museums, theaters, bookstores and remarkably preserved buildings of this magnificent city. At the center of it all is the Champs-Élysées. With its inviting riverside promenade, graceful bridges and splendid views of all things Parisian, from the Eiffel Tower to the Louvre Museum.

\* Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

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## Day 2 — Paris, France

One of the most pleasurable activities in Paris is whiling away the time in one of the city's outdoor cafés. Whether you are sipping a café au lait or a kir royal, there is no better way to feel like a Parisian. The hub of social and culinary life, cafés have been part of the city's fabric since the 1600s. During the 20th century, literary and artistic figures—such as Ernest Hemingway, Colette and Pablo Picasso—famously met over drinks to share their works and ideas. Today, thousands of cafés line the pavements and squares to connect with France's culture and history.

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## Day 3 — La Roche-Guyon, France

The picturesque village of La Roche-Guyon lies within the verdant Vexin Français Regional Nature Park, bound between the meandering Seine River and a striking wall of white chalk. This idyllic setting is home to a number of historic monuments, including a 15th-century church dedicated to St. Samson; a 16th-century salt store; a public fountain presented to the village in 1742; and the town hall, inaugurated in 1847. The beguiling 12th-century Château de La Roche-Guyon, however, is undoubtedly the village's most emblematic landmark, once capturing the attention of poet Victor Hugo, impressionist Claude Monet and composer Joseph Kosma, among many others. The castle and its breathtaking surroundings still mesmerize all who visit it.

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## Day 4 — Scenic Sailing: Seine River

The Seine meanders through the mellow vistas of Normandy. As it makes its sleepy and serpentine way to the English Channel, it winds along for 240 miles from Paris, more than doubling the distance of a crow's flight. As you sail, swathes of fields unfurl toward groves of apple orchards, sources of the region's famed Normandy cider. Calvados apple brandy is also a regional specialty, and a celebrated staple ingredient in Normandy cuisine. You will also gaze upon picturesque villages and historic abbeys on these bucolic banks.

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## Day 5 — Normandy Beaches, France

History focused its sights along the coast of Normandy, France—notably Omaha, Juno and Gold Beaches—on the early morning of June 6, 1944, as American, Canadian and British troops made landfall in their first European incursion during World War II. The entire operation was termed Operation Overlord, the code name for the invasion of Normandy. The remains of the concrete structures and steel causeway of Mulberry Harbor, built by the British, can still be seen on the beach near the village of Arromanches. The Arromanches Debarment D-Day Museum presents animated 3D scale models to help visitors grasp this exceptional harbor and its contribution to the battle—considered perhaps the single greatest innovation that ensured victory for the Allies.

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## Day 6 — Les Andelys, France

Les Andelys is best known for its imposing castle overlooking the city, the Château Gaillard. Built in 1196 by Richard the Lionheart, the castle and the village's strategic location bolstered the importance of Les Andelys throughout the Middle Ages. The town also gained notice for its Sainte Clotilde Miraculous Spring, where the wife of the first Frankish king, Clovis, turned well water into wine to serve the builders of her Benedictine monastery. Europe's devout, upon hearing of the act, flocked here on pilgrimages until the end of the 19th century.

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## Day 7 — Paris (Le Pecq), France

The origins of Paris can be traced back to a Gallic settlement founded during the 3rd century BC. By the time Napoleon III established the Second Empire during the mid-19th century, it had expanded into a large city and was in need of a major transformation. What transpired was a division of Paris into 20 *arrondissements*, starting at the Île de la Cité and spiraling out in a consecutive numerical order—the city's present design. From the lively jazz bars of the Latin Quarter to the steep, ivy-clad streets of Montmartre, these charming districts are a delight to explore.

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## Day 8 — Paris, France

Life in Paris revolves around the Seine River, with 37 bridges crossing the river, each telling a story. Perhaps none are so extravagant as the Pont Alexandre III, a graceful span named for the Russian tsar who signed the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1892. Downriver, the five-arched Pont d'Iéna is beloved for its scenic location linking the Eiffel Tower to the Trocadéro district. The Pont des Arts, set between the Louvre and the Institut de France, was famed for its thousands of padlocks, attached by couples to the railing grate as a sign of their devotion to each other. After breakfast, disembark your ship and transfer by high-speed train to your next ship.

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## Day 9 — Lyon, France

Lyon straddles the Rhône and Saône Rivers. After Paris, it is considered the country's most significant cultural center. Amid a cityscape of red-roofed buildings, tree-lined boulevards and riverside promenades, the cobblestone streets of Old Lyon host a rich collection of Renaissance architecture and intimate  *traboules*, unique passageways through buildings that connect adjacent streets, all of it overlooked by the grand basilica atop Fourvière Hill. The city also boasts a wealth of outstanding museums, cultural treasures and excellent Lyonnaise eateries.

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## Day 10 — Lyon, France

Lyon is known as the food capital of France. It is not uncommon for well-heeled Parisians to travel to Lyon for dinner. The city is surrounded by towns and villages that produce excellent fresh produce, and gastronomic outlets are plentiful here. The great chefs of Lyon enjoy celebrity status, whether they prepare classic recipes the traditional way or elevate them with their own signature touches. Their delicious meals may be paired with a glass of light, fruity Beaujolais from the north or a bold Rhône red from the south.

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## Day 11 — Vienne, France

Situated in France's Côtes du Rhône region, Vienne is the gateway to Lyon's countryside. It is one of the oldest towns in France, with a history that can be traced through its architecture. Among its Roman remains and artifacts, the Roman Temple of Augustus & Livia dates back to the 1st century AD. Its Roman amphitheater, nestled in the hills of Mont Pipet, is one of the best preserved in the nation. Vienne also boasts remarkably preserved medieval buildings and market ruins. Other landmarks include the Abbey of Saint Pierre and the Church of Saint-André-le-Bas.

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## Day 12 — Tournon, France

Tournon lies secluded between the river and the vineyard-blanketed granite slopes that nurture fine vintages. An ancient castle, built snugly into a rock, overlooks the riverside setting. A settlement has perched on this hill since Celtic times, but the stunning views from its overlook have never changed. The name of its neighboring wine-producing region, Tain-l'Hermitage, comes from the hermit who planted vines here after returning from the Crusades. Today, his vines are awash in sunshine and produce a port-like wine and some stellar whites.

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## Day 13 — Arles, France

In the last days of the Roman Empire, Arles was the capital of Roman Gaul and boasts many Gallo-Roman ruins including Les Arènes; this ancient amphitheater seats 20,000 and is still used today for bullfights and plays. The town has an energetic feel, attracting farmers from the countryside to the frequent and famous Provençal market. It also enjoys a rich artistic heritage; the Mediterranean sunlight here inspired legendary Impressionist Vincent van Gogh to paint a number of works. Many of Arles's sights are immortalized in his paintings.

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## Day 14 — Avignon, France

Avignon's narrow streets are lined with churches and remarkable medieval buildings. This "City of Popes" was the papal seat for 70 years during the 14th century after the sitting pope abandoned Rome and fled here. The massive church-fortress Palais des Papes, or Palace of the Popes, was the center of the Christian world during that controversial period. It remains a work of Gothic splendor. Another of Avignon's notable structures reaches into the Rhône, the ruins of the Pont d'Avignon. The 12th-century bridge, immortalized in folk song and dance, once spanned the river.

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## Day 15 — Avignon, France

When the Catholic Church acquired Avignon during the 1300s, it quickly transformed the quiet riverside village into a major religious and cultural center. Evidence of the makeover is everywhere. In addition to the enormous palace, the church constructed a wall around Avignon and provided mansion-like residences to its cardinals. Avignon Cathedral was dwarfed by its neighbor, the Palace of the Popes. Centuries after the papacy returned to Rome, the Vatican called for a gilded statue of Mary to be placed atop the cathedral; her golden gaze still welcomes visitors today. Bid farewell to your fellow guests and journey home. Or spend more time exploring, perhaps joining one of our extensions.

\* Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

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*\* One shore excursion included per port; all others available at an extra charge.*