

FRENCH TOUR WITH CHRIS GOSSIP 2017

REIMS – TROYES – PARIS

Sunday 17 September – Wednesday 4 October 2017

(Group meals : **B** = Breakfast - **L** = Lunch - **D** = Dinner)

(Important reminder : this weekend (Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 Sept) is the annual *Weekend du Patrimoine* when, as many of you know, buildings, monuments and sites not usually open to the public, can be visited, and very often free-of-charge.)

Sunday 17 September : Commencement of the tour in Paris (D)

Hotel Concorde Montparnasse

Place de Catalogne - 40 rue du Commandant René Mouchotte 75014 Paris (01 56 54 84 86)

17h00 : General Get-together in hotel

19h30 Welcome Dinner : *Montparnasse 1900* : 59 Bd du Montparnasse (01 45 49 19 00) (Make sure to bring a camera – the restaurant is a classified historical site for its *art nouveau* decoration!)

Monday 18 September B D

10h00 By coach to Reims.

Hôtel Mercure Centre Cathédrale 31 Bd Paul Doumer 51100 Reims (03 26 84 49 41)

After lunch and settling into hotel :

15h30 guided visit of the World Heritage cathedral – one of the largest cathedrals in the Christian world, famous in particular not only for its glorious façade, but for the place it has occupied in French history ever since King Clovis was baptised here at the end of the fifth century. From 1223 to 1825 it was in this cathedral that the kings of France were crowned, not in Notre-Dame de Paris. (2 groups Français and English)

19h30 Dinner in Hotel

Tuesday 19 September B L

9h00 Transfer by coach

9h30 Guided visit of the World Heritage *Basilica of St Remi* and the adjacent Abbey-Museum of Saint Remi.

If the main structure of the basilica dates back to the 11th century, the former abbey (now a museum) is essentially a superb example of 17th-18th century architecture. (2 groups Français and English)

11h00 The first of the champagne guided visits : *Caves Taittinger* and the cellars dating back to the Gallo-Roman chalkpits : 9 Place St Nicaise (03 26 85 45 35) (Visit in English)

Transfer by coach.

12h30 Lunch in the restaurant *Le Pré Champenois* 1, rue J.J.Rousseau (03 26 24 27 15)

14h30 a short guided visit of the *Cryptoportique Gallo-Romain* dating back to the 3rd century AD : built on the site of the original Roman Forum this is one of the five known *cryptoportiques* in the world. Discovery of the old town and the town rebuilt after WW1, style transition from *Art Nouveau* to *Art Déco*. (2 groups Français and English).

Free evening

Wednesday 20 September B L : All-day coach excursion to the small but lovely town of *LAON*

Proud of its geographical site as well as of its reputation for floral decoration and parks, Laon is the 40th richest place in France as far as classified historic monuments and sites are concerned, and has been awarded by the Ministry of Culture the prestigious classification «Ville d'Art et d'Histoire». Its history goes back some 2000 years, beginning with the Gallo-Roman period approx 40 BC, later becoming a «royal city» and capital of the Carolingian Empire under Charlemagne; it was a major medieval city, retaining its importance right up until after the First World War. Amongst Laon's most interesting features are the *souterrains* which allow the visitor to follow 2000 years of history!

10h00 : guided visit of the town (2 groups Français and English)

12h30 Lunch in the Restaurant *Le Trappist*, 39 rue St Jean (03 23 89 00 79)

15h00 : guided visit of the “souterrains” for one group (English) or *le Petit Train* for those who are claustrophobic or have difficulties walking.

Return to Reims and free evening.

Thursday 21 September B L

10h30 : By coach to the *Villa Demoiselle* (now owned by Vranken-Pommery), a superb example of the transition from *Art Nouveau* to *Art Déco*.

11h-12h30 guided visit in English of the *Villa Demoiselle* followed by a Champagne tasting.

12h45 : Lunch in one of France's truly great restaurants, *Le Parc des Crayères*. (03 26 24 90 00) (2 star Michelin restaurant, four“toques” in Gault-Millau...). 64 Bd Henri Vasnier (The chef is Philippe Mille, *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* in 2011)

Mid-afternoon : transfer by coach to town centre and Hôtel.

Free time to visit some of the other famous sites, especially the World Heritage *Palais du Tau*, the *Fine Arts Museum*, the *Foujita Chapelle*, or even the excellent *Automobile Museum* for the enthusiasts!

Free evening.

Friday 22 September B L : the programme for the day is organized by the *Ecole des Vins de Champagne*, part of the *Institut National des Vins de Champagne*, based at Ay. (03 26 55 78 78 Etienne Monet.)

Return to Reims and free evening.

Saturday 23 September B L : Not a long day in the coach, but changing hotels all the same!

9h00 Leave hotel with luggage.

10h00 Visit of *Mercier* in *Epernay* (reservation AM 27424*01) English : the celebrated giant tun (with a capacity of more than two hundred thousand bottles of champagne) designed by the *Champagne Mercier* in 1889 for the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris.

A spectacular panoramic lift takes the visitor down to the cellars, and the visit of (some of) the 18kms of cellars is in a small tourist train ! After the visit to *Mercier*, a short ride to farewell our stay in Champagne in a place where, in a sense, it all began : Hautvillers and a certain *Dom Pérignon* who was cellar-master for 47 years in the *Abbey of Saint-Pierre* at *Hautvillers* (his tomb can be seen close by).

12h30 *Restaurant de l'Abbaye de Hautvillers*, (03 26 59 44 79) with all its associations with the history of champagne!

Mid-afternoon, we continue in the coach (approx 1hr) to the historic and beautiful town of Troyes.

Hôtel Relais St Jean 52 rue Paillot de Montabert 10000 Troyes 03 25 73 89 90

(+ **Best Western Hôtel de la Poste** for Jean, Chris, Annie and David). 35 rue Emile Zola 10000 Troyes (03 25 73 05 05)

Free evening.

Sunday 24 September B D

Many people, for reasons which will become clear during your visit, think that Troyes belongs to the Ile de France (ie the region of «Greater Paris»), but in fact it is still in the region of Champagne-Ardenne, now known as the *Région Grand Est*.

It is without doubt not only one of the loveliest towns in the whole region, but one of the most historic too. Its origins, not surprisingly, go back to the Gallo-Roman period.

But perhaps apart from the historical high points of the Treaty of Troyes and all that meant for the history of French and English kings, its true historical greatness relates to the medieval success of the *Foires de Champagne*.

Not surprisingly, Troyes, like Laon, is classified a «*Ville d'Art et d'Histoire*». In the 18th century it became celebrated for its textile industry which lasted until the mid 20th century – and the commercial success of the city today bears a direct rapport with that industrial history (which you will all discover!).

One other important historical point : the official measure of precious metals, the troy ounce, owes its origins to the Foires de Champagne and the name of the town!

10h00 : guided walk through the **historic town** (2 groups, Français and English)

15h00 : guided visit of the **Modern Art Museum** which has one of the finest «fauvist» painting collections in France, and especially their celebrated Derain collection. (2 groups, Français and English)

19h30 Dinner restaurant *L'Illustré* 8 rue Champeaux (03 25 40 00 88)

Monday 25 September B D

10h00 : guided visit of the most wonderful place in Troyes – both the building and the inside! - **the *Maison de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière***.

And don't think that the idea of «tools» is of no interest, we were overwhelmed by all the museum had to offer when we first discovered it! (2 groups, Français and English)

15h00 : guided visit of the *cathedral*, followed visit of the *Apothicaierie*. (2 groups, Français and English)

19h30 Dinner restaurant *L'Essentiel* 14 rue du Général de Gaulle (03 25 46 52 28)

Tuesday 26 September B L

9h30 Short coach drive to the regional park of the *Forêt d'Orient*, one of the most important natural forest and lake areas in the whole region, famous too for its ornithological variety.

The director of the Park along with a Nature guide will help us discover the Flora, Birds and waters of the region. (English)

Lunch at *“La Mangeoire”* 6 rue du Relais de Poste Le Menilot, 10270 Montieramy (03 25 41 20 72) (Cruises on the lake are forbidden after the 10th September)

16h00 Visit and tasting of the most famous cheese of the region, *Chaource*, at the *Fromagerie artisanale de Mussy*.

Free evening

Wednesday 27 September B D

Morning in Troyes : over to you to do your own thing - we will provide you with a list of suggestions, including the *Marché Central des Halles* (8h – 12h30) and the *Marché extérieur* in the *Place de l'Hôtel de Ville*.

Among the options : *andouillette* – Troyes is famous throughout France (and the rest of the gastronomic world) for the «andouillette de Troyes», the history of which goes back to the 16th century . You like it, or you don't – but why not discover all that goes into the making of the andouillette....and why it is so famous?

Cité du vitrail, Hôtel Dieu-le-Comte: opens 9h30

Musée de la Bonneterie Hôtel de Vauluisant opens 10h

15h00 : Theme *fashion* – we go by coach to the great fashion commercial area for which Troyes is now so famous. Established in the 1950s – *Pont-Ste-Marie* – *Marques City- Marques Avenue* - almost all the great fashion shops (male & female!) make offers you will not find in Paris!!

19h30 Dinner restaurant *Le Damier* 10 bis rue de la Madeleine (03 25 40 28 40)

Thursday 28 September B L

8h45 Leave hotel for all-day coach excursion (with guided visits) to *LANGRES*

10h30 guided visit of what is officially classified one of the 50 most beautiful towns in France - and not therefore surprising that it is also a *Ville d'art et d'Histoire*, - Langres stands on a rocky spur dominating the whole countryside, and in the centre of which can be found its famous citadelle, the history of which goes back to Gallo-Roman times.

The town's most celebrated features are the wonderful *remparts* – some 3½ kms round, with its 12 towers and 7 gates into the city – a veritable encyclopedia of military, political and social history! In the 17th century Langres was considered totally invincible, while developments to its military fortifications in the 19th century (some 13kms in circumference) made Langres into the single largest fortified town in Europe!

Lunch restaurant *Le Cheval Blanc*, rue Estre (03 25 87 07 00)

14h45 visit of the *Maison des Lumières Denis Diderot* – a place inaugurated in 2013 on the 300th anniversary of Diderot's birth (a local boy, educated at the Jesuit college of Langres), but dedicated not only to the life and work of Diderot himself, but on a much wider scale paying tribute to the *Age of Enlightenment* and the monumental work produced : *L'Encyclopédie*. (guided in French + audio guides in English)

16h30 Before leaving Langres, there will also be a presentation (and tasting!) of perhaps the town's best-known gastronomic feature, its AOC cheese, called quite simply *Le Langres*! With a long history as just a local farm-produced (and eaten!) cheese, then evolving to the AOC status it enjoys today, the *Langres* is to be found all over France, easily recognisable by its orange colour, and by its form which many see as symbolic of the site of the city itself! The tasting + local wine takes place in the *Tour de Navarre*.

Return to Troyes and free evening.

Friday 29 September B L

9h30 Leave hôtel with luggage.

10h30-15h00 Stop to explore the lovely World Heritage town of Provins.

It owed its historical importance to the medieval *Foires de Champagne* and there is much to interest everyone – and plenty to photograph!

13h00 lunch *Hostellerie de la Croix d'Or*, 1 rue des Capucins (01 64 00 01 96) (This is the oldest *hostellerie* in France.)

15h00 Continue by coach into Paris

Hôtel Concorde Montparnasse

Place de Catalogne + 40 rue du Commandant Mouchotte 75014 (01 56 54 84 11)

18h30 Leave hôtel (metro direct line 4 *Montparnasse* to *Cité*) or bus 96 to *Cité* in order to be at the *Sainte Chapelle* by 19h15.

20h00 Concert in the *Sainte Chapelle*.

Saturday 30 Sept B D

9h30 -11h30 : either guided walks of “*Les Passages couverts* + the celebrated *Salle Labrouste*” in the BN Richelieu (English) or “*Des Romains au Quartier Latin*” (Français and English)

For the Latin Quarter *Montparnasse* : Line 4 direct to *St Michel*. Return via *Odeon*.

For *Les Passages Couverts Montparnasse* : Line 4 to *Châtelet* change to Line 1 to *Palais Royal - Musée du Louvre*.

Time for lunch. Then a rather special treat!

14h30 we leave by coach for one of the loveliest and historically important châteaux in the Paris region, namely *Vaux-le-Vicomte*.

15h30 guided visit of the château. After the visit, time to wander round the gardens designed by Le Nôtre and which so inspired Louis XIV that he appointed Le Nôtre to design and oversee the development of the gardens at Versailles. (You will also learn something of the extraordinary history of the château, which belonged to one of the most important men in the kingdom, Nicolas Fouquet. The beauty and grace of the château made Louis XIV so jealous when he was invited to visit the château by Fouquet, that he instantly ordered the arrest of Fouquet who was condemned to spend the rest of his life in prison...)

Some 2000 candles are set alight to illuminate both the château and the gardens. A superb experience! You will be invited to have dinner in the principal restaurant of Vaux-le-Vicomte called *Les Charmilles*, and to watch the *spectacle* provided for the entertainment of all the evening visitors. There is only room for 30 people in the restaurant so we must be in two groups :

19h00 : dinner for first group

19h45 : dinner for second group

Return by coach to the hotel in Paris (hopefully before midnight!)

Sunday 1 October B D

10h20 Leave Hotel : metro *Gaité* line 13 direct to *Champs Elysée-Clemenceau*.

11h00 Guided visit (in English) of the *Hôtel de la Païva* : 25 avenue des Champs Elysées. This small château was built between 1856 and 1866 by one of the great architects of the period and lavishly decorated by some of the greatest artists of the Second Empire.. The Marquise de la Païva was one of the most famous courtesans of the day and received all the most famous MEN into her home with its incredible décor which has been preserved in its original state.

14h30 Coach transfer to Versailles.

15h30 Guided visit (2 groups, Français & English) of the *Domaine de Marie-Antoinette* at Versailles. The Domaine is the name given to those parts of the Versailles château grounds where Marie-Antoinette preferred to live. It includes the *Petit Trianon* (built by Gabriel between 1762 and 1768) and given by Louis XVI to his wife as soon as he became king in 1774), the *Queen's Theatre*, the *Hameau*, and plenty of other haunts to discover. After the visit, return to Paris by coach.

19h30 Dinner in hotel

Monday 2 October B D

9h00 Leave hotel : metro *Montparnasse* line 12 direct to *Solférino*.

9h45-12h15 From the *Musée d'Orsay* to *La Villette* across Paris on the canal St Martin by boat.

13h00 Coach transfer for *La Malmaison*

14h00 Guided visit (2 groups, Français & English) of the small château of *La Malmaison*, which Josephine de Beauharnais bought in 1799 and had it renovated by Napoleon's greatest architects. After her divorce in 1809, La Malmaison became her principal dwelling. Passionately fond of the château gardens, Josephine wanted her garden to become "the most beautiful and the most curious garden in Europe"! Perhaps the most famous aspect of the garden is the collection of roses. (After the visit, return by coach to the hotel in Paris.)

19h30 : dinner in restaurant le *Château de l'Ouest*, 101 rue du Château 75014 (01 43 21 09 35)

Tuesday 3 October B L

9h15 leave hotel, Metro *Gaité* line13 to *Invalides*, where there is an easy change to line 8 to *Opéra*.

10h-12h00 Guided visit of the *Opéra Garnier* (2 groups, Français & English)

Farewell Lunch

13h00 : Farewell Lunch in a rather special setting for the farewell of what has proved to be a wonderful series of tours with Chris. It should be an unforgettable Farewell for us all! : *La Tour d'Argent*, 15 quai de la Tournelle 75005 (01 43 54 23 31)

After the lunch (approx 16h00), rest of the day free for last-minute visits (or shopping!). Your hotel room is reserved until after breakfast on Wednesday morning.

Wednesday 4 October B : End of tour. Departure after breakfast.