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*The flag of Occitania (this and all other illustrations free of copyright c/o Wikimedia Commons)*

## “OCCITANIA”: A LEISURELY EXPLORATION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

The Pyrenees – Dordogne and Lot river valleys – Lascaux - Conques – Rocamadour – Carcassonne - etc.

15 days, from Saturday, October 16 to Saturday, October 30, 2021

*A leisurely coach tour of Occitania, France’s magnificent southern region, including the high peaks of the Pyrenees, the lovely Dordogne and Lot river valleys, ancient pilgrimage shrines such as Conques and Rocamadour, medieval towns such as Cahors and Carcassonne, the prehistoric cave paintings of Lascaux, plus magnificent Mediterranean coastal scenery. Comfortable 3-star/superior tourist-class hotels, excellent local cuisine, and history talks by your tour escort, historian Jacques R. Pauwels, PhD, author of books such as ‘Beneath the Dust of Time: A History of the Names of People and Places’.*

Tour price, based on double occupancy: \$4,195 CAD from Toronto  
“Land only” (from/to Barcelona Airport): \$3,365 - Single room supplement: \$775)

### PROPOSED ITINERARY:

Day 1 - Saturday, October 16: Late evening departure from Toronto to Barcelona, with Air Canada. Dinner and a light breakfast will be served on board.

Day 2 - Sunday, October 17: Arrival around noon in Barcelona. A private coach will be waiting to take us north into the Pyrenees mountains. Arrival in the picturesque Catalan town of Seu d’Urgell, where we check into one of Spain’s famous state-owned hotels known as “[paradors](#)”. Check in, and free time to settle in. How about a swim in the hotel’s indoor pool before our leisurely early-evening walk through the town’s quaint old quarter and dinner in the hotel’s restaurant?

Day 3 – Monday, October 18: After breakfast, visit Seu d’Urgell’s Cathedral and beautiful cloister. Then we motor high into the Pyrenees to visit the miniature state of Andorra, whose twin sovereigns are the French president and the bishop of Seu d’Urgell! In recent decades, Andorra, formerly a sleepy mountain village, has metamorphosed into a booming city – and duty-free shopping paradise! Return to Seu in late afternoon and opportunity to check out the annual Pyrenees cheese fair being held in the town! No group dinner this evening.

Day 4 – Tuesday, October 19: Today, breathtaking mountain scenery awaits us as we motor via the town of Sort into the valley of the Noguera Pallresa, allegedly the most powerful river in the Pyrenees, and through a wild limestone gorge, the Congost de Collegats, to Pobla de Segur. We continue to Pont de Sert and, if time permits, take a sidetrip into the Boi Valley, famous for its Romanesque churches, collectively classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On to the mountain resort of Vielha in the Aran Valley, for a mid-afternoon coffee break before crossing into France. Arrival in time for dinner in Bagnères de Luchon, an attractive spa situated in a valley surrounded by majestic Pyrenean mountain peaks! Ever since Roman times, the local hot water springs have served as a magnet to visitors, including celebrities such as Flaubert, Bismarck, and Matahari. Accommodation in the 3-star/superior-tourist class Hotel Panoramic, located on the main street, and dinner in the [hotel](#).



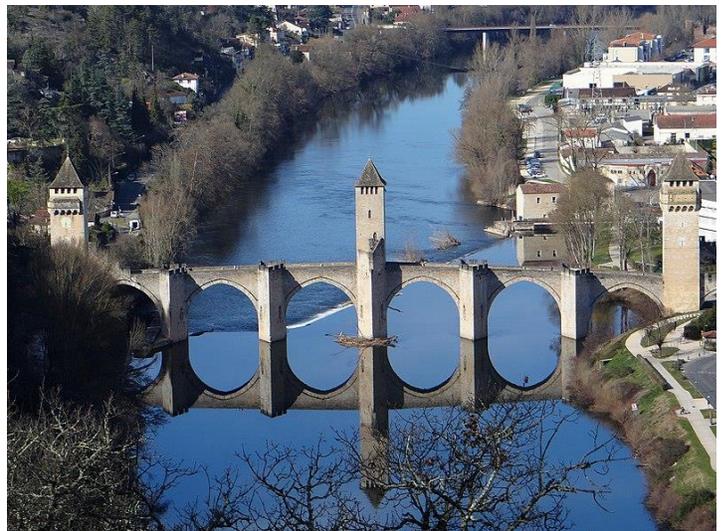
< *View from the summit of the Tourmalet*

Day 5 - Wednesday, October 20: A day of sightseeing in the spectacular Pyrenees, the highlight being the summit of the formidable Col du Tourmalet (alt. 2,115m), the highest paved pass in this mountain range, often featured in the prestigious Tour de France bicycle race. Return to Bagnères de Luchon in mid-afternoon and time to explore the town on your own, shop, visit the thermal springs, or take a cable car to the Superbagnères mountain peak (and famous ski station) overlooking the town from an altitude of over 2,200 meter above sea level. No group dinner this evening.

Day 6 - Thursday, October 21: Departure after breakfast. We motor north and visit Saint Bertrand de Comminges, a quaint medieval borough and formerly an important sanctuary along one of the four traditional pilgrims' roads to Compostela that crisscrossed France, namely the *Via Tolosana* or "Toulouse Road." Visit to the unusual Romanesque church and cloisters. We are now in the French province of Languedoc, in many ways the heartland of Occitania and our next stop is in its capital, the vibrant "pink city" of Toulouse. Time for lunch and a leisurely sightseeing tour by little train, with highlights such as Place du Capitole, the scenic banks of the Garonne, the Canal du Midi, the 16th-century Pont Neuf, and two superb architectural creations from the Middle Ages, the Romanesque Basilica St. Sernin, possibly the most beautiful pilgrimage church on the road to Compostela, and the Gothic Church of the Jacobins, i.e. the Dominicans, which contains the tomb of the famous Dominican scholar, St. Thomas Aquinas. In the afternoon we continue north into the small but very pretty neighbouring Occitanian province of Quercy. Our destination is the capital, Cahors, spectacularly situated on a meander of the river Lot. Accommodation in the centrally located superior tourist-class/3-star [Hotel La Chartreuse](#) and dinner of regional specialties in its restaurant.

*The fortified medieval bridge in Cahors >*

Day 7 - Friday, October 22: Morning sightseeing tour of Cahors, where the major attractions are the ancient quarter around the cathedral, the Fontaine des Chartreux, a spring that used to be a place of worship to the Celts who lived here in Antiquity, and above all the impressive fortified, and perfectly preserved, medieval bridge, the Pont Valentré, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most photographed monuments in France! Afternoon free to shop and/or explore the town on your own.



Day 8 - Saturday, October 23: Excursion into the wonderful neighbouring province of Périgord, the highlight being a visit to a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Lascaux, home of the world's most famous prehistoric cave paintings, estimated to be about 17,000 years old and mostly depicting large animals hunted by stone-age humans. Because the cave itself is not open to the public, we visit a high-quality, [identical reproduction](#). We also tour the very scenic Périgord stretch of the Dordogne river valley, with pretty villages such as Beynac and Domme, and visit the gardens of the Château of Marqueyssac, with their amazing [topiaries](#), as well as the very attractive old town of Sarlat-la-Canéda, bursting with shops selling local delicacies. Return to Cahors in late afternoon.



*The Dordogne river valley*



*Chateau and gardens of Marqueyssac*

Day 9 - Sunday, October 24: Excursion into the eastern, Quercy stretch of the Dordogne river valley, sprinkled with castles and pretty villages such as Souillac, La Treyne, Belcastel, Creysse, Carennac, and Castelnau; many pundits believe this region to be the most picturesque in all of France! We return to Cahors VIA a rugged *Causse*, a limestone “agro-pastoral cultural landscape” classified as a [UNESCO site](#), via the towns of Gramat and Labastide-Murat, birthplace of Joachim Murat, one of Napoleon's generals and his brother-in-law.

Day 10- Monday, October 25: This morning we tour the [Lot river valley](#), with as highlight a visit to [Saint-Cirq-Lapopie](#), perched on a rock overlooking tall white cliffs, a village that may claim to be one of the prettiest in all of France! Afternoon at leisure in Cahors. Dinner in the hotel.



*< Conques and its Romanesque abbey church*

Day 11 - Tuesday, October 26: Departure from Cahors after breakfast. We motor to Villefranche-de-Rouergue, one of the many fortified towns that were built in this area in the Middle Ages, many of them during the Hundred Years' War. On to Conques, arguably the prettiest of all towns and villages along the roads to Santiago de Compostela in France! The major attraction here is the magnificent Romanesque Abbey Church of Ste. Foy, featuring fine sculptures, a cloister, and a sumptuous collection of relics and other treasures, most famously the 10th-century statue-reliquary of the church's patron, Ste. Foy, herself. In the afternoon we motor via Figeac and Gramat to Rocamadour, another medieval sanctuary on the Compostela Road, clinging precariously to a rocky cliff which

rises dramatically from the floor of a verdant river valley. Dinner of regional specialties, and overnight in the best hotel in the village, the [Beau-Site](#).

*The magnificent medieval sanctuary of Rocamadour,  
clinging to its rock! >*

Day 12 - Wednesday, October 27: Morning sightseeing in Rocamadour, with attractions such as the Chapel of the Black Madonna, the Cave of the Hermit, the Sword of Roland, the amazing panorama from the castle walls, etc. Rest of the day free to shop and/or explore on your own.



Day 13 - Thursday, October 28: Departure from Rocamadour after breakfast. We motor south to the world-famous medieval town of Carcassonne, still surrounded by its mighty walls and fortifications, another UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will have time there for sightseeing as well as lunch. In the afternoon, we continue into French Catalonia, a.k.a Rousillon a



small but picturesque region tucked away between the mountains of the Pyrenees and the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Late afternoon arrival in the regional capital, Perpignan, where we will stay for two nights in the centrally-located 4-star [Hotel Mercure](#).

*< The fortified city of Carcassonne*

just south of the border, and dotted with resorts such as Argelès, a favourite haunt of painters such as Picasso and Matisse. Return to our hotel in mid-afternoon, and free time to relax before our final group dinner in a typical restaurant.

Day 14 - Friday, October 29: Morning walking tour of Perpignan's picturesque old town, followed by a leisurely exploration of the rugged but beautiful Côte Vermeille, or "Ruby Coast," similar to Spain's famous Costa Brava



*The Côte Vermeille or "Ruby Coast"*

Day 15 - Saturday, October 30: After breakfast, short transfer to Barcelona Airport in time for the non-stop return flight to Toronto, with Air Canada, departing around noon and arriving in the late afternoon.

**Tour price, based on double occupancy: \$4,195 CAD from Toronto**  
**“Land only” (from the first hotel to the last hotel): \$3,365. Airport transfers can be provided if you are arriving and departing on the same flights as the group. Single room supplement: \$775**

*Included in the tour price are:*

- Return flight Toronto-Barcelona, with Air Canada (one checked bag), including the usual combination of airport taxes, security fees and fuel surcharges.
- Accommodation based on double occupancy in superior tourist-class (3-star) hotels; the single room supplement is \$775;
- Breakfast daily and a total of six dinners or full lunches;
- Overland transportation by private coach;
- All sightseeing and visits as outlined in the itinerary, including admission to museums and monuments mentioned.
- Airport lounge pass for air-inclusive bookings made more than 90 days prior to departure.

*Not included are:*

- All items of a personal nature.
- Beverages with dinners, and meals other than those outlined above.
- A gratuity for the coach driver, 25 Euros or dollar equivalent, to be paid locally.
- Travel insurance: available upon request.

## **WHAT/WHERE IS “OCCITANIA”**

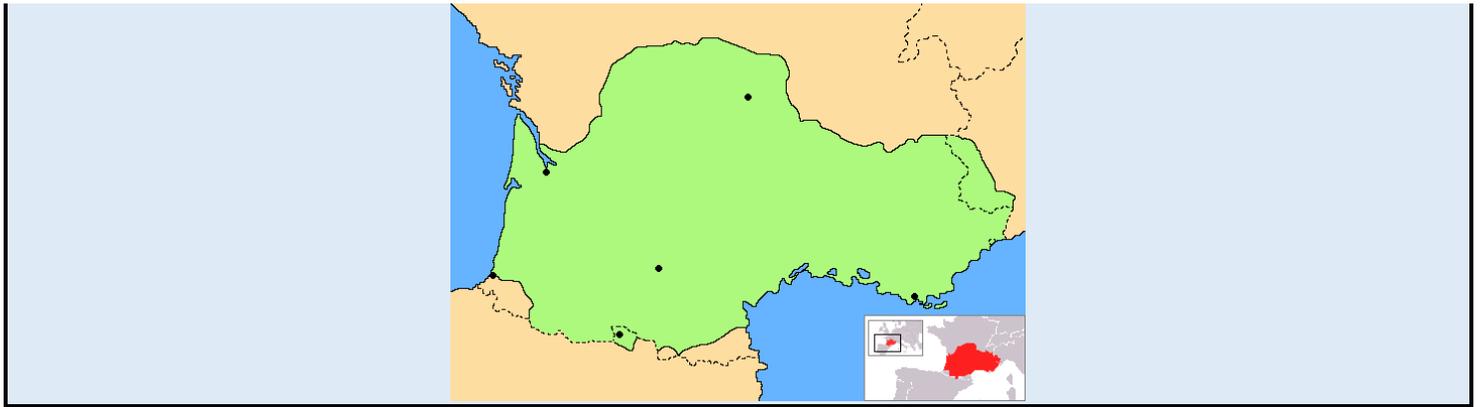
Occitania is the historical region in southern Europe where Occitan (or *lenga d'òc*, in French: *langue d'oc*), a Romance language, was historically the main language spoken, and where it is sometimes still used, for the most part as a second language. This cultural area roughly encompasses the southern third of France, and especially the province known as Languedoc, in addition to Monaco and small parts of Spain and Italy. Occitania has been recognized as a linguistic and cultural concept since the Middle Ages, but has never been a legal nor a political entity under this name. (Source: Wikipedia)

Video with a [hymn to Occitania](#):

Suggested reading: Denis Knight, *Days in Occitania*

Websites about food and wine of the Périgord, Occitania's quintessential foodie region:

<https://www.visit-dordogne-valley.co.uk/french-living/food-specialities> -  
<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/gourmet-dordogne-how-to-make-the-most-of-one-of-frances-top-foodie-regions> - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-kwGejbaf4>



#### TERMS & CONDITIONS

##### RESERVATIONS AND DEPOSITS:

Reservations should be made as early as possible to ensure the departure of your choice. **Due to Covid 19 no payment is required at this time and as a result there is no penalty until you are notified by us that the trip will go. We then will ask for payment the amount of which will vary depending on how close we are to departure. You can then decide to pay or cancel.**

##### REFUND OF UNUSED ARRANGEMENTS:

Because the rates of Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. are based on group participation, no refund can be made for any tour accommodation or tour service or tour feature not taken. If cancellation occurs while the tour is in progress, no refund can be made for the tour portion not taken. We strongly suggest that to allow for any unexpected contingencies, you purchase the all-inclusive insurance.

##### CANCELLATION POLICY:

**Please see note under Reservations and Deposits. Until contacted for payment there is no penalty to register for this tour. If you then choose to pay the required deposit the terms and conditions noted below will go into effect.**

Refund of deposit is made if cancellation is received in writing by Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd. more than 90 days prior of the departure date of the tour less a \$500.00 non-refundable administrative fee per person. For cancellation received in writing 90 days prior or less the following cancellation charges apply:

90 days to 61 days before departure: 25% of tour cost  
60 to 31 days before departure: 50% of tour cost  
Within 30 days prior to departure: 100% of tour cost

##### RESPONSIBILITY:

The acceptance of the initial service to be provided under the tour shall be considered an acceptance by the tour member of those conditions. We also reserve the right to decline, to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. We reserve the right without notice, to withdraw any part or all of the tour. Factors such as airline schedule changes, hotel overbookings, inclement weather, travel warnings by the Canadian Government etc. may necessitate changes in the itinerary. There may also be other circumstances in which changes become necessary or advisable.

By commencing the tour, I agree to the release and agreement as included below.

##### RELEASE & AGREEMENT:

By placing my deposit and commencing the tour I understand and agree to the following:

1. That all tours are delivered in conjunction with other service providers, including but not limited to travel agent and booking services, airlines, hotel and accommodation providers, transportation providers including but not limited to coach, train and ferry services, restaurant providers, and local guides. We shall not be held responsible for the failure by any person or company to render any transportation, lodging or other travel service to be

provided on the tour. All hotels, transportation and other travel services are provided subject to all the terms and conditions under which they are offered to the public generally.

2. I know that tour programs include walking, and may including hiking and fitness programs that have potential hazardous activities associated with them. I should not participate prior to approval by my physician. I assume any and all other risks associated with these events included but not limited to falls, contact with other participants, the effects of the weather including high heat and/or humidity.
3. To release, indemnify and hold harmless Pauwels Travel Bureau and their affiliates (which term shall include parents, subsidiaries, officers, directors, shareholders, agents and employees of Pauwels Travel Bureau as well as Pauwels Travel themselves) (the "Released Parties") from, and agree not to sue the Released Parties for, any claims that I may have arising from, or in connection with, any personal injury, bodily injury, mental anguish, emotional distress, physical, property or other damage that I may suffer from any cause whatsoever related in any way to my participation in this tour. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, I release, indemnify and hold harmless the Released Parties from, and agree not to sue them for any personal injury, bodily injury, mental anguish, emotional distress, physical, property or other damage that I may suffer from the Released Parties' negligence other than from intentional or reckless acts by such parties. I further agree to release, indemnify and hold harmless the Released Parties from any and all acts of God, war (whether declared or undeclared), terrorist activities, incidents of politically motivated violence, illness or quarantine, strikes or government restrictions or the acts or omissions of any other agents over which the Released Parties have no direct or indirect control, including, without limitation, airlines, railways, bus companies, hotels, shipping companies, guides and sub-contracted agents or tour operators. This release also includes activities not offered that may be considered risky. I further release any Tour Directors, bus drivers or other individuals involved in my tour.
4. That the air carrier's liability for loss of or damage to baggage or property, or for death or injury to person, is limited by their tariffs, or the Warsaw Convention, or both.
5. That Pauwels Travel Bureau shall have no liability or responsibility for me when I am absent from activities, such as visits to friends or relatives or during stay-ahead/stay-behind option periods if the stay-ahead/stay-behind period does not include the services of a Tour Director.
6. To abide by directions of my Tour Director or other leadership personnel during my tour. Failure to do so may result in my termination from tour immediately. I understand that to disobey such rules or directions are to waive the right to any refund, and that I may be sent home at my own expense. The participant and family undertake full financial responsibility for any damage caused by the participant and agree to pay his/her return home on the first available flight, should his/her behavior be deemed detrimental to the welfare of the group.
7. To abide by all local laws when in Canada and abroad, including those concerning drugs and alcohol. (Minors must have parents' permission to use alcohol even if the local law would otherwise permit them to.) I understand that if I abuse or disobey such laws, even unintentionally, I waive my right to a refund, and Pauwels Travel may send me home at my own expense. I also understand that should local authorities be involved, I will be subject to the laws of the country I am visiting.
8. That if I become ill or incapacitated, Pauwels Travel and its employees, or a designated chaperone may take any action they deem necessary for my safety and well-being, including securing medical treatment (at my own expense) and transporting me home. In the event of a medical emergency, Pauwels Travel will attempt to cause appropriate treatment to be administered, and the traveller authorizes Pauwels Travel to do so. Pauwels Travel, however, makes no warranty that it will be able to cause effective (or any) emergency treatment to be administered.
9. That Pauwels Travel may use any film likenesses taken of me and any of my comments while on a tour for future publication and also use my contact information for future Pauwels Travel communications.

#### A WORD ABOUT *GROUP* AIRFARES:

Please note that when booking one of our air inclusive tours, Pauwels Travel has negotiated reduced rates with the airline

that we are able to confirm and lock in up to 359 days before travel. While it is wonderful to share the savings and flexibility this provides with you, our valued guests, the privilege does come with some restrictions. In some cases it may not be possible to collect frequent flyer miles, you may not be able to check in online 24 hours before travel, or you may need to try checking in with your ticket number rather than your booking reference and, in **almost ALL cases we are not able to offer advanced seat selection.**

It is the airline that makes the reservation and has control over the booking so it is their policy, not ours, that prevents us from assigning specific seats. If a request is made, it is passed on to the airline by our staff when they submit the names to the airline, i.e., 30-60 days prior to departure. Calling us several days before you leave will not change this fact nor will getting upset with our staff.

If a certain type of seat is indispensable to you, we suggest that you book our tour on a “land only” basis and make individual flight arrangements, in which case you may be able to get the seat of your choice; Pauwels Travel would be happy to assist you with that reservation at absolutely no additional charge. We will offer you the best fare available, but please note that this can only be done once a tour is a guaranteed departure because your individual airfare’s conditions are likely to involve cancellation penalties.

We thank you in advance for your kind understanding of the above!

## REGISTRATION FORM

Please book \_\_\_\_\_ seat(s) on the "Occitania Tour from October 16 – 30, 2021.

*No payment is required at this time and as a result there is no penalty until you are notified by us that the trip will go. We then ask for payment the amount of which will vary depending on how close we are to departure. You can then decide to pay or cancel.*

I wish to book on group flights \_\_\_\_\_ OR land only \_\_\_\_\_. (If booking land only please send the office a copy of your flight details).

**WE REQUIRE A COPY OF YOUR PASSPORT (INFORMATION PAGES ONLY) VALID 3 MONTHS AFTER TOUR TO BE SENT IN WITH YOUR REGISTRATION FORM.**

PASSPORT NAME(S): **Please** indicate the appropriate title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr., Ms.)

Surname \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Surname \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ Middle(s) \_\_\_\_\_

If applicable, give your commonly used first name as you would like it to appear on your name tag: (e.g. "Liz" for "Mary Elizabeth")

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

If traveling alone, is a SINGLE ROOM REQUIRED? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If sharing, what is your bed preference: twin (2 beds) \_\_\_\_\_ double (1 bed) \_\_\_\_\_?

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:** We find the earlier a request is made, the more success we have in filling it, so please list any dietary requests, allergies, any special physical needs or frequent flyer numbers etc here.

We cannot ensure requests made 30 days or less prior to departure will be possible.

**Insurance,** Please call the office for premiums then record it on application and add premium to deposit.

I /we would like to purchase (please check and record your rate):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

All-inclusive Package \_\_\_\_\_ Non-medical Package \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_ **OR** Decline Insurance \_\_\_\_\_

**PAYMENT:**  Cheque payable to Pauwels Travel  Visa  Mastercard  American Express

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**"I/we agree to the terms and conditions attached to the program, have indicated our insurance choice, indicated any special requests and included payment".**

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Signature) (s)** \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward this completed and signed form, copy of passport and payment to:

PAUWELS TRAVEL BUREAU LTD.

55 Dufferin Ave, Brantford, Ontario N3T 4P6

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