



66, Rue de Verdun
11000 Carcassonne - France
Tel. 04 68 26 92 47
Fax.04 68 26 92 54
E-mail: nathalie.cielbleu@orange.fr.
Site: www.voyages-carcassonne.com

Aude Cathar Country - History and Region

This tour provides a harmonious combination of historical heritage and the diversity of vineyards in the Aude. Gastronomy is also a strong point of this tour.

Day 1 ARRIVAL AT CARCASSONNE

Arrival at **Carcassonne** or Toulouse Blagnac airport; transfer to your hotel in Carcassonne in a comfortable tourist coach.

Day 2 CARCASSONNE AND PUIVERT CASTLE.

The first part of the day will be devoted to visiting **Carcassonne**.

Reception at the hotel and introduction to your bilingual guide and private oenologist. Guided tour of the **Medieval City** with your private guide, where you will discover its 52 towers, 3 kms of ramparts and the St Nazaire basilica. This fortified Medieval City acquired ramparts in the 4th century and then the Vicomtes de Trencavel castle, built in the 12th century. It was saved from destruction in the 19th century and restored by Viollet Le Duc. It was classified as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1997. At the end of this visit there is a wine tasting session in the City Club, where you will be introduced to the vintage wines of Aude. Your oenologist will initiate you into the finer points of wine drinking and help you discover and *understand* the treasures of our region.

Gourmet lunch in the medieval city of Carcassonne.

Sample menu:

Green Asparagus Soup with Turmeric

Sea bass with Garden Peas, Beans and Lemon Conserve

Pan-fried Loin of lamb with gravy cooked in Tagine style

Moist Chocolate Cake with Caramel

The second part of the day takes you to explore **Puivert**, one of the best preserved castles in the Aude hinterland, where the “La Neuvième Porte” (The 9th Door) was filmed. Firmly built on rock, at an altitude of 605 m, Puivert castle rises up majestically along 175 m. Of all the castles from the first half of the 14th century, Puivert, lying in the hinterland of the Aude known as Quercorb, is undoubtedly one of the best preserved. **Guided tour of the Castle.**

You carry on to a **wine tasting session** in a vineyard. In Limoux, famous for its “sparkling wines”, you will savour new tastes: Cremants (slightly sparkling), Blanquette (famous sparkling wine of Limoux), and other famous Wines.

Return to Carcassonne and gourmet dinner in the medieval city of Carcassonne.

DAY 3: LASTOURS CASTLES- WINE ESTATES

Breakfast at the hotel and introduction to your bilingual interpreter and personal oenologist. Departure for **Cabardès**, introduction to wines and wine **tasting** in a vineyard of vintage Cabardès wines. You will taste wine from another vineyard and your oenologist will compare it with the wines tasted in the first one you visited.

*Located at the North-West of Carcassonne, the **vineyard of Cabardès** lies in the foothills of the Black Mountains. This geographical position gives it the benefit of both the warm, exuberant Mediterranean climate, and the moderate oceanic climate. This duality is found in the soils and the grape types grown, and is reflected in the quality of wines and their originality. The vineyard visit shows you the winemaker's vision, which you can experience by tasting the wines.*

You carry on for a panoramic viewpoint at **Lastours**, and a look back at its history with your guide. You can enjoy a sweeping view of the four silhouettes of the Cathar Castles.

The four castles of Lastours: **Cabaret**, **Tour Régine**, **Fleur d' Espine** and **Quertinheux**, built on a single base rock, protected Cabardès from the 9th century right up to the Revolution. These heroic castles sheltered a community of Parfaites. They were a sure refuge for Cathar fugitives and faydit knights, as all the nobility of the region embraced their cause.

Gourmet lunch.

Sample Menu:

Delicate creamy Watercress soup, with "petit gris" snails

Sea Bass in white wine sauce with Braised Fennel and Green Olives

Crusty Saddle of Lamb in Basil, Vegetables in wine sauce

Matured cheeses

Bitter Chocolate Tart with Bourbon Vanilla Ice-cream

¼ l of Wine; Coffee

Afternoon: transfer to **Caunes-Minervois** and guided tour of the abbey founded in the 8th century. *The monumental collection of abbey buildings at Caunes Minervois is one of the most remarkable examples of early southern Romanesque art, the most interesting element being the Saint Pierre Saint Paul abbey church, whose transept opened only in the 12th century. Its superb gate and porch built in*

the 12th century consists of three arches decorated with multiple and varied motifs (pine cones, people, animals, cable moulding, etc.)

The tour continues with the Minervois vineyard. Presentation of wines and tasting in a Minervois vineyard, where your oenologist will teach you how to savour this wine with its unique taste and continues the introduction to our wide variety of regional wines.

The Minervois extends in an imaginary triangle between Carcassonne, Béziers and Narbonne. The wine growers here know how to cultivate good grapes from the delicate soil and make fine red, white and rosé wines, including the Saint Jean de Minervois made with Muscat grapes, whose subtlety stands out from other natural sweet wines of the Languedoc.

The Minervois thus makes it possible to explore vineyards in wild landscapes which the winegrowers have cultivated, and from which they extract the very best wines.

Gourmet dinner in the Medieval City of Carcassonne.

Sample of Menu:

Rabbit Croustillant with Ginger and Tarragon

Strips of Pike Perch Roast with Cabbage and violet mustard sauce

Pre-dessert

*Croustillant of Red Fruits in Jelly, Mousseline Cream with Vanilla
½ Bottle of regional wine and coffee*

End of the day.

DAY 4: MEDIEVAL VILLAGES OF CORBIERES

Breakfast at the hotel and welcome by your GIN guide and your oenologist.

Departure to **Lagrasse**: “one of the most beautiful villages of France”. Located in a charming valley, with the Orbieu flowing through, Lagrasse nestles amidst a valley surrounded by hills and vineyards reputed for its wines of character and excellent quality. Visit to the fortified village, with paved streets, which wind around the Benedictine abbey of Ste Marie d' Orbieu, currently inhabited by Canons. Lagrasse, known as the “city of art and trades”, is home to many craftsmen (potters, watercolorists, leather workers, etc.). In this enchanted region, the craft industry finds a continual source of inspiration.

You carry on to a vineyard to taste **Corbières** wines with your **private oenologist**. Introduction to wines from the vineyard and tasting of vintage Corbières wines to perfect your “education”.

Corbières: From the gates of Carcassonne to the ancient island of Leucatel. Corbières is a vast rectangular area with evidence of a turbulent geological history. The “terroir” (soil) is especially suited for producing red wines. The Carignan grape type is used up to 50%. More and more often the wine is matured in oak casks. This bears witness to the high quality approach used by the winegrowers of Corbières for over a century. The red wines are rich, aromatic, balanced and fruity. Although in competition today with Coteaux of Languedoc and Saint Chinian, the wines of Corbières continue to offer good bargains.

You carry on to Villeroque-Termènes for a lunch where authenticity is the order of the day. Located in the castle, the **Medieval Rôtisserie**, unique in Europe, will take you back to the life and times of this 16th century castle. The surroundings as well as the food are reconstructed according to a book of that epoch. You will eat this amazing cuisine in a chimney corner, off an old bread chopping board, or utensils discovered at the time of excavations in the castle. ... a journey back in time.

After the lunch, a guided tour of the castle of Villeroque-Termenès.

In 1321, Guilhem Bélibaste, the last known Occitan Cathar Parfait, was burnt alive here.

Guilhem Bélibaste had been initiated into Catharism and became a Parfait in Catalonia, where he had fled to. Only Parfaits could propagate the religion, and his death meant the end of the Cathar religion.

Return to Carcassonne for a **slide show** on Cathar history.

Dinner in a **gourmet restaurant** at the foot of the city; its Chef has received the Silver medal “Bocuse d'argent 2003”. The refined cuisine will enchant you as much as the elegantly decorated ambiance.

Sample Menu:

Chilled Green Pea Cream Soup; Red Mullet seared in Virgin Olive Oil

Mediterranean Radish in Lemon Conserve

Veal chop infused in bay leaves, Stuffed Vitelotte potatoes with yellow wine gravy

Fresh and Matured Cheeses

Cherries with Rosemary Honey, Guanara Spheres, Sangria Granita

End of the day.

DAY 5: DEPARTURE/TOULOUSE AIRPORT

Breakfast in your hotel, then transfer to Toulouse Blagnac or Carcassonne airport.

Departure. End of our services.

Aude Cathar Country - History and Region

PRICE PER PERSON	3-STAR HOTEL	4-STAR HOTEL
BASED ON 30 PERSONS	Us to consult	Us to consult

THE PRICE INCLUDES:

- 1 - Stay in 3 or 4-star Hotel in the city (based on double room)
- 2 - Transport in a tourist coach as per programme
- 3 - Gourmet lunches and dinners on days 2,3 and 4
- 4 - Services of a professional oenologist.
- 5 - Services of a bilingual guide
- 6 - Visits to vineyards indicated in the programme with wine tasting sessions
- 6 - Entry to sites indicated in the programme

THE PRICES DO NOT INCLUDE:

- 1 - Tourist tax
- 2 - Supplement for individual room
- 3 - Drinks during meals (except if specified)
- 4 - Any service not mentioned in the programme.
- 5 - Personal expenses and extras (tips, etc.)