



# South of France and Northern Italy

21 AUGUST TO 12 SEPTEMBER 2019



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## Tour Outline

In August and September 2019 I am going to be escorting a very special tour which will offer surprising contrasts, from the kaleidoscope of the French Riviera, to the rural picturesque countryside of Chianti, through to the craziness and beauty of Venice. At the same time we will make visits to places that most tourists never knew existed and well off their normal check lists, seeing sights and sites that only the lucky few end up experiencing.

My speciality and passion over the last twenty five years has been guiding in France and Europe, getting to know its people, culture, history, food, wines, festivals and its unique regions better than most. Each tour encompasses many different experiences. I want people to understand the country they are travelling through, to understand the people, and at the same time to be inspired and moved by what they see. But most importantly I want you to have a holiday – I take the angst out of travelling! I see my role as an educator, an entertainer, and a friend! I can't wait to take you on holiday! Following is what we have in store!



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## French Riviera

**Wednesday 21 August to Saturday 24 August**

Our tour will begin by spending three glorious nights in the fabulous four star Hotel Welcome right on the waterfront in the fishing village of Villefranche sur Mer, not far out of Nice. We will start our tour with wonderful drinks on the waterfront followed by a “Welcome to France” dinner. During the days we will explore nearby Cap Ferrat visiting one of the most beautiful gardens on the Riviera at the Ephrussi de Rothschild garden. We will also visit the perched village of Eze sur Mer once the tourists have gone home as well as exploring the rabbit warren of streets in the Old Town of Nice. You will be treated to a special dinner at a friend's restaurant which has one Michelin star! Our days will start at a pace which will allow an early morning swim in the sea (temps of 28 degrees!) and at the end of your short stay here you will definitely want to stay here for the rest of the month, but sadly we have to move on to see equally beautiful places!



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## Riviera Hinterland

**Saturday 24 August to Tuesday 27 August**

From the coast we will proceed in our mini-bus (9 seater) to our charming hotel overlooking the appealing village of St Paul de Vence, only a 40 minute drive from the busy-ness of the Cote d'Azur. For the next three full days I will introduce you to a world that most tourists would never know existed. We will spend one day dedicated to

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the Grasse perfume industry and will visit a private farm supplying flowers of various types exclusively for Dior perfumes, and will end that day by making our own batch of “eau de toilette”! We will also visit the impressive Maeght Foundation, one of the greatest galleries of modern art. You will experience as well the opposite of the “Riviera” life by visiting remote hill towns seldom seen by tourists, and take in some of the most attractive markets in France. We will see some of the most memorable villages in the south, like Mougins and Tourettes sur Loup. This week in the south of France will offer you a most exciting clash of colours and experiences, from the mountains to the sea, and leave you breathless for more! There will also be plenty of time to just enjoy the peaceful surrounds of our pool, with breath-taking views over St Paul and the countryside.

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## **Santa Margherita, Liguria Coast, Italy**

**Tuesday 27 August to Friday 30 August**

Today you will be driven for three hours through to the Ligurian Coast to the town of Santa Margherita in Italy, where we will stay in our beachfront four star hotel. For our time here we will explore one of the most beautiful port villages in the world, Portofino, with its exclusive boats, sensitively colourful and beautiful houses, and exquisite people! This coastline is magical. While in Santa Margherita I would like to show you one of the most precious private gardens on the Italian Riviera at the La Cervara Abbey. While here we have a “free” day where you will have an option of travelling to the Cinque Terre. You have the option of going here by boat or by train, and I will fully discuss this with you. There are other options available for that day as well and a decision is not required until we are there, or you may choose to spend this day exploring Santa Margherita or just swimming in the hotel pool or the Mediterranean (Ligurian Sea). (These options just mentioned are not included in the price).



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## **Lucca**

**Friday 30 August to Sunday 1 September**

Today we will drive the short distance through to Lucca, just out of Pisa in our charming four star hotel. During our time here we will explore this beautiful town, and make a visit to one of the leading gardens of the area. As well we will make a visit to the Marble Quarries in Carrara which have been used for the last two millennium – product that now graces Art Galleries and smart bathrooms around the world! We will also visit Pisa and its Leaning Tower.

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## **Chianti**

**Sunday 1 September to Friday 6 September**

We will base ourselves for the next five nights in the heart of Chianti, mid-way between Florence and Siena. Our four star hotel, with a pool, in Chianti will be in the wonderful village of Radda in Chianti, allowing time to potter around the streets at all times of the day and night! During our time here we will visit all the attractive towns such as Panzano, Greve in Chianti, Radda in Chianti, San Gimignano, Castellina and Siena. One day we will travel to Florence where we will have a walking tour of that city, including visiting the Accademia to see Michelangelo’s David – and a chance to see what can be done with all that marble we’d just seen near Lucca! One afternoon we are going to be turned in to top Italian chefs – no need to be scared! After our cooking class we will dine

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on our creations! While in Chianti we will have time to relax as well as experience beautiful villages and picture postcard perfect views of rolling hills and cypresses.

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## Venice, Italy

Friday 6 September to

Monday 9 September

Today we will travel to Venice. Along the way we are going to make a visit to the town of Ravenna. This is not your usual stopping off place for tourists, but I have a special reason for coming here! In the centre of this town is the Basilica di San Vitale. Here is one of the earliest Christian churches from the 6th century, and a trip here is like stepping in to paradise! We will stop here for our visit and lunch.

In Venice we are going to stay in one of the most charming hotels in the world (!! ) right near St Mark's square. While here we will tour on foot the island, as well as be taken by private boat around the network of canals that make up this "floating" town. There will also be free time to explore such places as Peggy Guggenheim's Gallery or the Gallerie dell'Accademia, or to visit the Ducal Palace (these visits not included). Venice is one of those places that surprises you – the days are busy, the nights peaceful, and every view is an emotional overdose.

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## Lake Como, Italy

Monday 9 September to

Thursday 12 September

Today we are driving through to Lake Como. On our way here we are going to make a diversion to see the impressive Scrovegni Chapel, in Padua, which features the extraordinary work of the Master of Modern Art as we know it, Giotto. Here we will see his works that were completed in the early 1300s. We will then drive through to the lake. We will have three nights on the lake staying in the beautiful Bellagio. Our hotel here looks right over the lake, and aperitifs looking over the lake will be a truly wonderful experience for you. While here we will go for an impressive boat trip on the lake, as well as visiting villas including the impressive Villa Balbianello, seeing glorious views and gardens. I could think of worse things to do than spending time sitting on the edge of this lake sipping a Prosecco!

We will have some free time here to allow for personal whims and requests! The Villa Carlotta should be a destination for you to explore its beautiful garden and to stroll through the villa. Also walking from the hotel to Villa Melzi is wonderful. Some may like to join me for a bit of a hike!?!? (Boat transfers on lake not included).

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## End of Tour

Thursday 12 September

Today our tour ends. From here it is possible for you to fly out of the Milan Airport to an international departure airport such as Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt or Rome. I will drop travellers at either the Milan Airport or Milan Central Train Station, depending on the plans of other travellers. You may consider flying through to these destinations after a few days of exploring Milan prior to your homeward travel?

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## Before and After Tour Plans

Previous travellers who have joined me on this tour have begun their tour with a few nights at the Villefranche sur Mer hotel at the beginning of the tour in order to get over their “jet lag” – this is a lovely thing to do! Similarly at the end of the tour some people have chosen to spend a few nights in Milan.

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## Costings

The price for this tour is 9900 Euro pp. per person. My prices include all transportation, guiding, accommodation, visits (unless mentioned otherwise), and many special meals are included. Prices based on double occupancy room, and there will be a supplement for single occupancy.

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## Deposits

A deposit is required for a position on this tour of 1000€ per person.

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## Final Payment

This will be due 8 weeks before the beginning of the tour.

Payment of the deposit implies your commitment to make the final payment, so you are encouraged to take out full comprehensive travel insurance to cover you for cancellations etc.

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## Tour Inclusions

Accommodation and Breakfasts throughout

Transportation and Guiding

Dinners (incl. wine and water) x 7

Visits as detailed

Canal transfers and tour in Venice (private gondola and traghetto trips not included).

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## Not Included

Lunches (unless specified)

Please contact me if you are interested:

John Reese, France-The French Way

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