

RAIL HOLIDAYS TO FRANCE

Ever since the opening of the Channel Tunnel and the advent of Eurostar, holidays to France by train have been revolutionised. The speed of the Eurostar services to Lille and Paris coupled with the extensive and efficient TGV network throughout France means that much of France including the very south is within reach of London within one day's travelling.

DEPENDING ON YOUR ULTIMATE DESTINATION you can usually take the Eurostar to Lille or to Paris and then with a change of station you're on a fast TGV to one of the French regions. Depending on where you want to go, you may or may not require a hire-car but if you do need one, usually for heading off to explore the countryside, then the TGV stations are often outside city centres, making it easy to join the French road network without traversing city centres.

Eurostar also travels direct to Avignon on Saturdays in the summer months, making this an ideal route for Provence and the south. Other popular train routes by TGV from Paris or Lille are:

Nice for Nice itself or anywhere on the French Riviera

Tours for the Loire Valley

Lyon for the Rhone Valley and Beaujolais

Dijon for Burgundy

Aix en Provence as well as Avignon for Provence

Bordeaux for the Dordogne as well as Bordeaux and the vineyards

Sample timings

London to Avignon	leave at 9am and arrive by 5pm
London to Nice	leave at 8.30am and arrive by 6.30pm
London to Bordeaux	leave at 9am and arrive before 7pm
London to Tours	leave at 11.30 and arrive at 5.30 pm

These really are just samples, as there are often several reasonable options out and back each day.



TGV on the French Riviera

NICE AND THE FRENCH RIVIERA BY TRAIN

This rail holiday to the south of France offers both a relaxing journey and stunning scenery as you travel from north to south, crossing the undulating lands of the north of France, then the brown roofs and golden stone of Burgundy that give way to the terracotta of further south. The landscape changes and becomes more golden and majestic as you travel into Provence.

WE HAVE STRUCTURED THIS HOLIDAY so that travel out in one day via Lille and back via Paris where you spend one night. (Although this can be extended). Once in Nice on the French Riviera, this holiday includes five nights in Nice at the Hotel La Pérouse, a magnificent but charming hotel at the very end of the famous Promenade des Anglais and a few minutes' walk from the picturesque flower market. From your base here enjoy all that Nice has to offer, from the beach, the shops, the markets and so on, but take time to explore the French Riviera, perhaps as far as Menton in one direction or Cannes in the other, by train.

By rail 6 nights / 7 days

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day one

Begin your rail holiday by departing on an early morning Eurostar from London St Pancras to Lille, before changing to a high-speed train for the journey to Nice. On arrival in Nice at about 8.30pm, take a taxi to your hotel where you stay five nights. The Hotel La Pérouse is just a few minutes from the station.

Days two to five

At leisure on the French Riviera. There are many sights to see and places to visit on the Côte d'Azur, including Monte Carlo, Monaco and Cannes, as well as places further inland such as Grasse and St Paul de Vence. We can arrange a hire car for all or part of your stay if you would like to explore the freedom to explore the region or make your way using public transport.

Day six

Leave Nice and travel by TGV train to Paris. If you leave Nice at around 11.30 am, you can be in Paris in time for dinner as the journey takes just over five and a half hours by high speed TGV. On arrival in Paris take a taxi to your hotel where you spend one night.

Day seven

End your rail holiday by travelling by Eurostar from Paris back to London St Pancras, leaving at about 7pm and arriving back in the UK by 9pm (times are entirely flexible, so long as we know which time you want when we make the booking for you).

HOTELS USED IN THIS RAIL HOLIDAY

Hotel La Pérouse 4 star deluxe, Nice

A stay at La Pérouse is different to most city hotels. There are 56 rooms and a heated outdoor pool from April to October. You are located opposite the beach and a short walk from the centre of the old town with its market, shops and restaurants.

Hotel Balzac, 5 star, Paris

The Hotel Balzac has just 70 or so rooms and is situated very near the Champs-Élysées. The hotel is elegantly furnished and a short walk from the shops and bustle of the most famous street in Paris.

INCLUDED IN YOUR RAIL HOLIDAY

- First or second/standard class travel on all trains including Eurostar

AT THE HOTEL

- 5 nights' bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at Hotel La Pérouse in Nice
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at the Hotel Balzac in Paris

Please note: Transfers in Paris and Nice are not included in this holiday but can be quoted for on request.

PRICES

From £1,390 per person for first class rail travel.
From £1,260 per person for second class rail travel.
(prices subject to train and hotel seasonality)

DATES

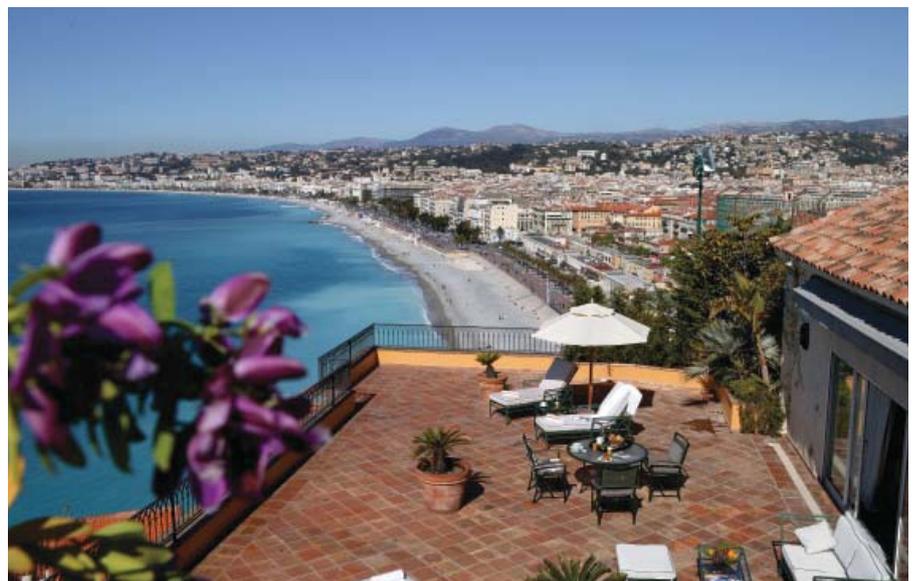
This rail holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week. You can extend this holiday by as many nights as you wish, adding them in Nice or Paris or both.



Courtyard dining at La Pérouse



TGV



View from the Hotel la Pérouse

TOUR OF PROVENCE

This holiday to Provence makes the most of the excellent rail connections from London to the south of France, allowing you to travel easily in one day from London to Avignon and then to start exploring Provence using a hire car. Your first stop is in a village in the foothills of Mont Ventoux, a short distance from the vineyards of Beaumes de Venise and Gigondas. From here you can travel across Provence stopping off in the picturesque Luberon with its hill-top villages, and the lavender fields and sunflower beds nearby before reaching your stop near Fayence, from where you can drop down to the coast at Cannes if you want (about an hour's drive away). Your final stop is in the beautiful, discreet and artistic city of Aix en Provence, renowned for its shady, plane-lined streets and squares, 'a thousand' fountains, connections with famous artists and numerous museums and galleries.

By rail and hire car 8 nights / 9 days

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day one

Leave London St Pancras to travel to Avignon by train. On summer Saturdays there is a direct service with no need to change trains. On any other days the journey can be made with a very straightforward change of train at Lille Europe station. On arrival in Avignon (either the town centre station if arriving directly on the Eurostar or the TGV station just outside the town if arriving from Lille or Paris), collect your hire car and drive to the village of Crillon le Brave, to the north-east of Avignon. Spend three nights at the Hotel Crillon le Brave.

Days two and three

At leisure to explore this attractive area to the east of the Rhone and in the foothills of Mont Ventoux.

Day four

Drive from Crillon le Brave to the Terre Blanche Hotel and Spa Resort, near the village of Fayence – this is a journey of approximately three hours if you go direct but you should meander through the Luberon en route. Spend three nights at the Terre Blanche resort.

Days five and six

At leisure to explore the area around Terre Blanche and to relax with the excellent leisure facilities on offer here.

Day seven

Journey westwards from Terre Blanche resort to the town of Aix en Provence.

Day eight

Spend a leisurely day exploring the shady streets and squares of artistic Aix en Provence.

Day nine

Take the train back to London via Paris from Aix, or if on a Saturday in the summer you could drive to Avignon and take the direct Eurostar back to London. If you have to go via Paris, you can leave Aix at 11.51 and still be back in London by 17.39.

HOTELS

Hotel Crillon le Brave, 4 star, near Gigondas

This is an exquisite bolt-hole in the village centre of Crillon le Brave, a village that nestles near the foot of Mont Ventoux and a short distance from the wine producing villages of Gigondas and Beaumes-de-Venise. Stylish and relaxing.

Terre Blanche Hotel and Spa Resort, 5 star, Terre Blanche

This is an elegant resort in a quiet area close to the pretty little village of Fayence. There are spectacular views across hills and hamlets to the Alpes Maritimes. There are 115 suites situated in villas type buildings. The hilltop Faventia restaurant serves Mediterranean cuisine. There is a large spa and fitness centre, two golf courses and an outdoor pool.

Hotel Villa Gallici, 5 star, Aix en Provence

This magnificent 5 star hotel of just 22 rooms stands in its own grounds on the edge of the spa town of Aix en Provence and near the foot of the famous Sainte Victoire hillside, inspiration to Cézanne. The gardens are exquisite, it is decorated sumptuously and the restaurant is opulent.

From £1,825 per person for first class rail travel.

From £1,790 per person for second class rail travel.

Prices based on two sharing a double or twin room and subject to train and hotel seasonality.

INCLUDED IN YOUR RAIL HOLIDAY

- First (Standard premier on Eurostar) or second (standard on Eurostar) class travel
- At the hotels
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Hotel Crillon le Brave near Gigondas
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Terre Blanche Hotel & Spa Resort in Provence
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Hotel Villa Gallici in Aix en Provence
- Group A hire-car for the duration of your stay in Provence

DATES

This rail holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week.



Sunflowers of Provence



Crillon le Brave in Provence



Lavender fields of Provence

CHATEAUX OF THE LOIRE

This rail holiday to France uses Eurostar and high speed TGV to travel from London St Pancras to Tours in just five hours. Once in the Loire Valley, we include a hire car for you to explore the area and travel between three chateaux hotels situated in different parts of the Loire valley, enabling you to see its varied landscape, numerous chateaux and towns along its rivers. The Loire Valley was traditionally the hunting grounds of French Kings and is renowned for its gentle countryside, vineyards, forests, rivers and of course the chateaux that once belonged to the French nobility. The area is also suited to a wide range of activities such as cycling, canoeing, walking, riding and golf.

By rail 6 nights / 7 days

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day one

Leave London St Pancras at around 9am and travel by Eurostar to Lille. Following a simple change of platform in Lille, continue southwards by TGV to St Pierre des Corps station in Tours arriving around 4pm. Here you collect your hire car and drive to your first chateau – Chateau de la Bourdaisiere, 8 miles from Tours. Spend two nights at Chateau de la Bourdaisiere.

Day two

From the Chateau de la Bourdaisiere, a Renaissance chateau owned today by a Prince who has created marvellous gardens of fruit trees, tomatoes and dahlias. From here you should visit the chateaux of Chenonceau and Amboise. The gardens at the Chateau of Chenonceau are beautiful and there is a magnificent vegetable garden.

Day three

Your end-destination today is the 12th Century Chateau de Marçay in undulating grounds south of the mediaeval town of Chinon. However, en route you have the city of Tours with its mediaeval quarter and the delightfully picturesque chateau of Azay-le-Rideau.

Day four

Chinon itself, home to Rabelais, is worthy of a visit. The castle dominates the town and there are nearby vineyards too. However, a short drive away is the spectacular castle of Villandry on the banks of the river Loire and resplendent with its outstanding gardens. From here you can cross the river and visit the wine towns of St Nicolas de Bourgueil and then stop at Fontevraud Abbey on the way back, resting place of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her son, Richard the Lionheart.

Day five

Drive to Chateau de Noireux – 55 miles away but stop to visit the troglodyte houses in the banks of the Loire and then the town of Saumur.

Day six

The Chateau de Noireux consists of the chateau itself and a manor house but there are acres of fields and woods to explore. Anjou vineyards are nearby as is the city of Angers with its Cointreau distillery.

Day seven

Drive back to Tours St Pierre des Corps station and return your hire car. This is a journey of about 80 miles. Take a train leaving early afternoon via Lille to London St Pancras where you arrive just after 6pm.

HOTELS

Chateau de la Bourdaisiere, 3 star equivalent, Montlouis sur Loire

This is a private chateau operating as a hotel with about 30 rooms. It has the feel of a private home with lots of personal possessions of the family who own the chateau in the public rooms. There is a restaurant service, outdoor pool and tennis court.

Chateau de Marçay, 4 star, near Chinon

Another Relais and Chateaux member, Chateau de Marçay is constructed in white stone typical of the region. There are 34 bedrooms varying in size. Comfortable lounges have roaring open fires during winter months and in the summer months there is a garden with outdoor swimming pool.

Chateau de Noireux, 4 star, Briollay

Also a member of Relais and Chateaux, this hotel is a beautifully restored chateau and manor house. Attention to detail in the decoration is noticeable throughout. The restaurant is excellent. The grounds include an open-air pool and tennis court. There are 19 rooms.

From £1,450 per person for first (standard premier on Eurostar) class rail travel.

From £1,360 per person for second (standard on Eurostar) class rail travel.

Prices based on two sharing a double or twin room and subject to train and hotel seasonality.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN YOUR RAIL HOLIDAY

- First/standard premier or second/standard class travel on all trains
- At the hotels
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at the Chateau de la Bourdaisiere
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Chateau de Marçay
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Chateaux de Noireux
- Group B hire-car for the duration of your stay in the Loire Valley.

DATES

This rail holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week. For more information regarding rail services to and within France, view our train guide.



Chateau de Marçay



Chateau Chenonceau



Chateau de Villandry

CASTLES OF THE DORDOGNE AND BORDEAUX

In this holiday you explore the Dordogne region of France travelling out and back by train and finishing with a short stay in a food and wine hotel near Bordeaux. The Dordogne is a popular holiday region and travelling by rail eliminates long drives and inconvenient flights. The region has abundant supplies of clear flowing rivers, craggy hillsides, hill-top villages and mediaeval castles. The Dordogne is ideal for walking, cycling and canoeing. The gastronomy is excellent – with truffles, foie gras and walnuts produced locally. The train journey to the Dordogne is via Paris.

WE SUGGEST SPENDING the first night in Paris then continuing the next day to Bordeaux where you collect your hire car. You end the holiday with two nights near Bordeaux, in a unique hotel overlooking vineyards, with a Michelin-starred restaurant and offering you cookery lessons if you want. A full day here can be spent at or near the hotel or you can venture northwards to the Médoc and Margaux vineyards. On your way back the whole journey can be made from Bordeaux to London in one day.

By rail 9 nights / 10 days

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day one

Depart London St Pancras at a time of your choice. The Eurostar runs at regular intervals throughout the day. The journey to Paris takes two and a half hours. Spend the night in Paris.

Day two

Leave Paris early afternoon and travel by train south to Bordeaux, where you arrive at about 6pm. As you travel southwards you see the scenery change from the comfort of your train seat. On arrival at Bordeaux station, collect your hire car and travel to Chateau des Vigiers which is under one and a half hours' drive away. Stay three nights at Chateau des Vigiers.

Days three and four

The Chateau de Vigiers is situated amidst its own vineyards on the prestigious Route des Vins between Bordeaux and Bergerac. There is plenty here at the Chateau to occupy you including golf and swimming but nearby you have the town of Bergerac with its antiques market, the wine town of St Emilion and the valley of the Dordogne.

Day five

Today you travel into the heart of the Périgord to Trémolat, a picturesque village on a scenic bend in the River Dordogne. Stay at the 4 star Relais & Chateaux hotel, Le Vieux Logis at Trémolat for three nights.

Days six and seven

Within easy reach of Trémolat are the iconic sights of the Dordogne such as Les Eyzies and the prehistoric cave paintings, Sarlat (a market town at the heart of the Périgord) and the pretty towns with their fortified chateaux that line the banks of the river such as La Roque Gageac and Bezenac. Fine dining is assured in the Michelin-starred restaurant at Le Vieux Logis or there are numerous restaurants you can drive to in the vicinity.

Day eight

Head eastwards following the Dordogne river today to reach Bordeaux and check-in to Le Saint-James, a unique wine and food Relais & Chateaux overlooking vineyards on the outskirts of Bordeaux.

Day nine

Spend today in a variety of ways: visit the attractive and historic city of Bordeaux itself, explore the Margaux and Médoc vineyards or take part in one of the many cookery courses at Le Saint-James in their dedicated cookery school kitchen.

Day ten

Return your hire-car to Bordeaux station and take an early afternoon train to Paris, change stations, then continue on the Eurostar back to London arriving before 9pm.

HOTELS

Hotel Balzac, 5 star, Paris

The Hotel Balzac has just 70 or so rooms and is situated very near the Champs-Élysées. The hotel is elegantly furnished and a short walk from the shops and bustle of the most famous street in Paris.

Chateau des Vigiers, 4 star, Monestier

The Chateau des Vigiers is a grand property set in vineyards. The hotel is a beautiful place to relax and unwind, with a great range of sporting activities and historical sites on your doorstep.

Le Vieux Logis, 4 star, Trémolat

Le Vieux Logis is a 400 year old manor house in a quaint, traditional village. The hotel is a member of Relais and Chateaux and is full of charm and character. There are 26 rooms of varying size.

Le Saint James, 4 star, Bouliac near Bordeaux

This is a boutique hotel of unique appearance renowned for its gastronomy and cookery school. Indulge in good food and wine, treat yourself to a cookery lesson or use this welcoming hotel as a base to explore Bordeaux and the famous vineyards of the Médoc.

From £1,740 per person for first class rail travel.

From £1,660 per person for second class rail travel.

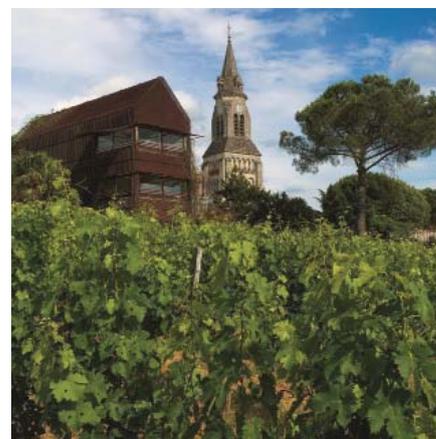
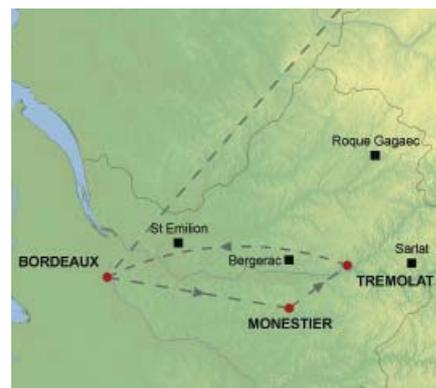
Prices based on two sharing a double or twin room and subject to train and hotel seasonality.

INCLUDED IN YOUR RAIL HOLIDAY

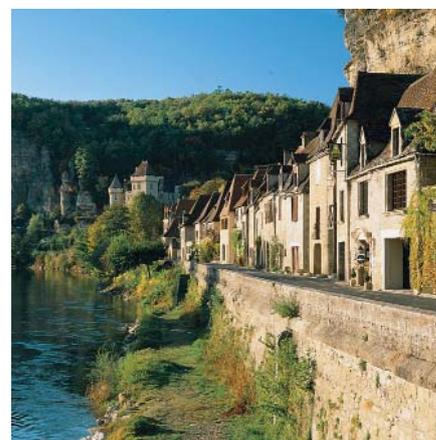
- First or second class travel on all trains (as above) including Eurostar
- At the hotels
 - 1 night's bed and breakfast in a classic room at Hotel Balzac in Paris
 - 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Chateau des Vigiers in Monestier
 - 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at Le Vieux Logis in Trémolat
 - 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a standard room at the Saint James near Bordeaux
- Group B hire-car for the duration of your stay

DATES

This rail holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week.



Le Saint James near Bordeaux



Dordogne valley