

Self drive holidays

SD12 The Perigord

8-day & 7-night tour from Périgueux to Souillac

Itinerary

Day 1 - Périgueux and Brantôme

Périgueux city, the capital of Périgord, possesses an exceptional architectural heritage, testimony of more than 2000 years of history. Originated around a sacred water-spring, venerated by the Gaul, the city has experienced many events and destructions. The old Roman city has united with its neighbour **Puy St Front** which has developed around a monastery built on the edges of Isle, to become today's well known Périgueux. You will visit the city's church St Etienne, the **cathedral St Front and its cloister**, the district of Puy St Front, restored recently which sheltered many craftsmen and traders.



To discover it better you must get lost in its small medieval streets, full with appeal and surprises. The district of la Cité still has many Gallo-Roman remains including amphitheatre and the tower of Vésone. Then you will reach Brantôme, not without having visited on the route the **abbey of Chancelade**, haven of peace at the bottom of some hills in the green valley of Beauronne and the **priory of Merlande**, nestled in a forest in a secluded valley. **Brantôme**, charming village on the edges of Dronne, also called 'Venice of Périgord', has an old abbey founded by Charlemagne. It is pleasant to walk on the river banks bordered with old houses.

Day 2 - The green Périgord

The last foothills of the Massif Central are a setting of undulating greenery, furrowed by a multitude of streams and sheltering many ponds. This tour will successively take you to the Chapelle-Faucher. From Brantôme, you will go up to the Côte valley and will visit the charming village of **La Chapelle-Faucher**, situated on a cliff, behind its castle of 13th century. The village has at least 4 churches and several mills along the river. Further, you will see the ruins of the **castles of Bruzac** before reaching **St Jean la Côte**, medieval village snuggled around the castle of Marthonce and its strange 12th century Romano-Byzantine church. Then you will reach **Thiviers**, one of the capitals of foie gras, famous for its markets and fairs. In the centre of the village, close to the church stands the Vauvocourt castle of Gothic and Renaissance style. Before joining the picturesque village of Villars, you will discover the **cave of Villars** in which you will see a small arranged part which contains many types of concretions, animal paintings and a rare scene: a man and a bison of the madgalenian period (17000 BC). You will lead to the Villars village and will visit the **castle of Puycuilhem**, magnificent Renaissance castle, comparable with the major castles of the Loire valley and the ruins of the **Cistercian abbey of Boschaud**, constructed in the 12th century and devastated during the Hundred Years' War and the wars of religion. Further, close to the village of St Crépin of Richemont, you will visit the **castle of Richemont**, built in the 16th century by Pierre of Bourdeille, the famous abbot of Brantôme. You will stop to visit the **Romanesque church of Vieux Mareuil** which with its battlements looks like a fortress. Then, you will discover the **castle of Mareuil**, a few kilometres further. It sheltered one of the four baronies of Périgord, which explains its defensive side. But it was modified in the Renaissance to make it more pleasant. The castle shelters a very beautiful flamboyant chapel and the interiors are richly furnished. Then the route comes to the bottom of the Tour Blanche and a hillock on which stands a donjon and the remains of a fortified castle.

You will pass through the small village of **Cercles** and its St Cybard church, only trace of an ancient priory, before joining the valley of Dronne and **Bourdeilles**, charming city at the bottom of rocks, dominated by an imposing fortress which has 2 castles: a fortified castle of the 13th century and a Renaissance castle which shelters remarkable furniture. You will reach Brantôme through the Boulou valley and the charming villages of **St Julien of Bourdeilles and Boulouneix**.

Day 3 - Bergerac and the Purple Périgord

The day starts with the visit of **Bergerac**. This town which extends on both sides of the Dordogne has expanded rapidly since 12th century with the development of trade across the river and was a stronghold of Protestantism in the 16th century. The old town has been restored and is worth a visit just like the very interesting tobacco museum. Today the city is surrounded by vineyards which produce several AOC wines, the Bergerac, the coasts of Bergerac, the Monbazillac, the Montravel and the Pécharmant.

You will leave Bergerac and go through the vineyard to the **chateau of Monbazillac** which majestically dominates the Dordogne valley and whose architecture is a fine compromise between the defensive art of the middle Ages and the Renaissance. Today, it is the property of the Cave Cooperative of Monbazillac, sweet wine that you will not miss to taste at the end of your visit. You will stop in the village of **Colombier** to admire the Romanesque church and keep on to the medieval village of **Issigeac**. It is necessary to be lost in this maze of small streets to appreciate the charm of this village. Through countryside you will reach **Eymet**, bastide (fortified town) founded in 1270 on the bank of the Dropt river. It is one of the rare bastides to keep a fortified castle with walls and keep. You return to Bergerac after visiting the **castle of Bridoire**, Protestant fortress partially destroyed and restored at the end of the 19th century by the family of Charles de Foucauld. A last stop at the bottom of the **Malfourat windmill** to admire the vineyard of Monbazillac, Bergerac far away and the Dordogne valley.

Day 4 - the Dordogne from Bergerac to Trémolat.

You will go along the Dordogne to discover the **castle of Lanquais** then the village of **Couze and St Font**, small locality which was specialized in the manufacturing of the Holland paper since 16th century. You will visit the **Larroque watermill** which still manufactures filigree paper using ancient methods. You will continue in the valley of Couze river to the English bastide of **Beaumont du Périgord** with its massive fortified church. Next stop will be la Bastide (fortified town) of **Monpazier** founded in 1284 under the reign of the king of England Edward 1st. Its perfect rectangular plan develops around La Place (square) des Cornières surrounded by houses dating from 13th to the 17th centuries. The route will take you to **Montferrand du Périgord** dominated by the ruins of a fortified castle, **Sainte Croix** and its Romanesque church, **St Avit-Sénieur** before reaching the **abbey of Cadouin** founded in 1115. The church and the cloister built at the end of the 15th century in flamboyant Gothic style were restored during last centuries and form a beautiful architectural unit which shelters the Holy Shroud museum which was the place of pilgrimages and religious ardour for many centuries ... and a very interesting museum of the velocipede! From Cadouin you will go **Lalinde** where you pass over the Dordogne and drive along the river and **cingle de Trémolat** where the Dordogne lounges at the bottom of high white cliffs in a circular arc. The views are magnificent. Then you will join the village of Trémolat and its Romanesque church of the 12th century.

Day 5 - The Dordogne from Trémolat to Sarlat

You will go to **Limeuil**, old village risen in tiers along the cliff and whose lanes climb towards the church and the ancient castle site. At the end of the village, you will visit the chapel St Martin whose construction (1194) was financed by Henri II of Plantagenêt in atonement of the murder of the archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket. You will cross **Le Bugue** and pass over the Vézère River to reach **Saint Cyprien** whose lanes around the imposing church (which belonged to an abbey) shelter many old houses. Then you will arrive at **Beynac et Cazenac**. This village clung to the cliff is dominated by its castle, formidable fortified place which played an important role during Hundred Years' War, the Dordogne being the border between the English and French territories ! You will climb up le caminal del Panieraires, very sloping small pedestrian lane bordered with old houses to reach the castle (to visit) and discover a magnificent panorama on the twists and turns of the Dordogne. You will stop a few kilometres further to visit the **hanging gardens of Marqueyssac**. Arranged over a rocky spur, the park dominates of its high calcareous cliffs the valley of the Dordogne and offers one of the most beautiful panoramas of Périgord. Then you will reach **La Roque Gageac**, this village built on the steep faces of cliff is one of the most beautiful sites of the Dordogne valley. You will traverse the green lanes of the village where the simple houses of peasants and craftsmen stood near the rich mansions of notables. Finally, you will arrive at **Sarlat** at the end of the day.

Day 6 - Sarlat and the Black Périgord

The morning is devoted to the visit of Sarlat - You will fall under the charm of this old town while walking through the maze of narrow streets with the medieval looks which shelter many special Gothic mansions and magnificently restored Renaissance. Capital of the Périgord Noir, Sarlat is an exceptionally protected town.

Sarlat became a city in the 8th century. Border between the Kings of France and England during the Hundred Years' War, Sarlat became English in 1360 and released after ten years by Du Guesclin. The cathedral of Saint-Sacerdos was set up under Henri IV. From 18th century, Sarlat lied dormant for 150 years before becoming again prosperous with the arrival of Railway. The exceptional number of registered or classified buildings made Sarlat capital of the Périgord noir, the first European city in terms of heritage.

After lunch you will leave to discover Périgord Noir, a drive of 4 hours (70 km) which will take you to Montignac passing thorough:

- **Temniac**, located at the top of a hill, this village offers the most beautiful panorama of the Sarlat town. The Romanesque chapel of very original style dates back to the 12th century and has been a much visited place of pilgrimage. Nearby you find the ruins of a castle which was a residence of the bishops of Sarlat.

- **The mill of the Tower of St Nathaléne** (16th century) which still manufactures the nut oil and hazel nuts. Its mechanism driven by water of Enea dates more than 150 years before.

- The **manor house of Eyrignac**. Of an exceptional beauty, the formal gardens of this manor house cannot be compared with any other and figure among the most beautiful gardens of France.

- **Salignac - Eyvignes**, pleasant village with its wheat market and its medieval castle which always belongs to the same family and which you can visit.

- **St Geniés**, one of the most beautiful villages of Périgord Noir with its many ancient mediaeval houses with the roof of stones, its 15th century castle beside the Romanesque church whose fortified bell-tower porch was added in 15th century.

- **St Amand of Coly** is rich with a very long history of exceptional architectural heritage. The fortified abbey-church, one of the jewels of the religious architecture in Périgord, is essential in the landscape by the power of the porch-donjon and its huge ogival arc. The fortifications and the multiple points of defence of the church give an idea of the power of this abbey which reigned on vast territories and resisted the hardships of the Hundred Years' War and the wars of religion.

- **Montignac**, pleasant city on the edges of Vézère. Old houses in lanes at the bottom of the castle. Return to Sarlat

Day 7 - the valley of Vézère and prehistory

This valley classified as the world heritage by UNESCO is remarkable by the beauty of the landscapes and interest of the sites and the testimony left by men who lived here during last 100 000 years. On this 80km drive you will see:

- **Cave of Lascaux** - you will visit a life-size reproduction of the 2 galleries in the upper part of the cave, the bulls room and the axial diverticulum which shelter the most paintings of Lascaux. The cave was closed in 1963 following deterioration due to the breathing of the visitors and thus introduction of humidity.

- **Castle of Losse**, medieval fortress built very steep, dominates the valley of Vézère. It is surrounded by walls and is bordered with deep ditch. A large Renaissance dwelling was built there between 1570 and 1576. It contains very beautiful tapestries and furniture of 16th and 17th centuries. The terraced gardens are remarkable and will leave you a memory of perfect harmony.

- **Le Thot, space Cro-Magnon**. This playful centre allows to initiate with the prehistoric art and to understand it better. You will see there other reproductions of the Lascaux cave not presented at Lascaux II. The park gives a general idea of the fauna which the man of Cro-Magnon lived with. The prehistoric camping and the scenes of the everyday life were reconstituted according to the data of the excavations.

- **St Leon de Vézère**, this small charming village is nested in a loop of the river and is dominated by the Côte de Jor and the castle of Chabans. This village has a splendid Romanesque chapel of 12th century and 2 other castles, the manor house of the Salle (14th century) and the castle of Clérans (16th century).

- **La Roque St Christophe**, this high calcareous cliff one kilometre long and 80 metre high was dug on many successive levels over the period by the river and the frost. These natural cavities served as shelters to the men of the prehistory, as fort and village in the middle ages and the Renaissance. You will pass through the villages of Moustier which has a famous prehistoric shelter and the village of Tursac with its church with a massive bell-tower before reaching

- **Les Eyzies de Tayac** - with the confluence of Beune and Vézère, the village of Eyzies has a pleasant site dominated by high cliffs. The village is especially well known as being the capital of the Prehistory and welcomes a large number of tourists who visit the national museum of Prehistory and the prehistoric sites still open to the public. (The caves Font de Gaume, Grand Roc...) to admire there the paintings or rupestrian sculptures. You will continue downhill from the Vézère passing through the bottom the castle of Campagne with its notched towers, to reach **Le Bugue**, large commercial burg in one of the last twists and turns of the river before its confluence with the Dordogne. To see the **village du Bournat**, reconstitution of a village and the pastoral life in the 19th century and the **abyss of Proumeyssac**. Return to Sarlat at the end of the day.

Day 8 - The Dordogne from Castelnaud to Souillac.

You join **Vézac** and the edges of the Dordogne, which you cross to go to visit the **castle of Castelnaud**, fortified castle of the 12th century which overhangs the Dordogne. This strategic place was much disputed during the Hundred Years' War and the rivalry between Castelnaud and Beynac whose fortress stands opposite the other bank, was fierce. Then you will go along the edges of the Dordogne discovering the round towers crested of pepper pots from the castle of Feyrac (not visited) to reach the elegant **castle of Milandes**. This Renaissance building was modified in the 19th century and was the property of famous Joséphine Baker, a big music hall star, born to St Louis (Missouri). Magnificent panorama on the Dordogne valley.

You will reach **Domme** after having crossed the Céou river and passing in front of the magnificent Romanesque church of **Cénac and St Julien**. This fortified town founded in 1281 by King Philippe Le Hardi to thwart the territorial expansion of England and to better control the river traffic, is classified among the most beautiful villages of France. It is necessary to stroll in the small streets to better discover the eventful history of this fortified town, built at the edge of the cliff, 150 meters above the Dordogne.

You will go down again towards the Dordogne and Vitrac to arrive at **Montfort** and its castle. Built on a cliff which overhangs a meander of the Dordogne (magnificent view), it must have been attacked, destroyed and rebuilt many times. You will stop to visit the very beautiful **church of Carsac-Aillac** which stands in the surroundings of greenery.

Further, built in a succession of rocky terraces, the **castle of Fénelon**, one of the most beautiful castles of Périgord Noir, has kept its defensive system and its stone roof. You will cross again the Dordogne, will pass in front of the magnificent **castle of Rouffillac** (... which you can rent for your next holidays...!) to join **Carlux**, a typical périgourdin village perched on a rocky spur with beautiful stone houses and small streets. Do not miss the sarrazine chimney of 11th century, the stone market and the church Ste Catherine.

Souillac, the town developed around an abbey founded in the 10th century and which glowed in the whole region during many centuries with its ups and downs, and the tragic periods like the Religion wars. We suggest you a walk to discover the old town and to visit the abbey Ste Marie and the church St Martin. *End of the tour at Souillac. Return of the rental car at Brive.*

More details and tips

The car - You can do this tour with your own car or with a rental car (not included in the price). We can get a rental car for you (Please contact us)

Hotels - On this tour, we suggest you stay in hotels of different categories.

Luxe self drive tour SD12-L – 4-star hotels

Comfort Self drive tour SD12-C – 3 & 4-star hotels or chateaus

Standard Self drive tour SD12-ST – 2-star hotels

Price includes

- 7 nights on B&B basis in hotels handpicked by us among the best.
- Parking fees if the hotel has one (only for Luxe tours)
- The detailed road book with the GPS waypoints of the main landmarks, villages, attractions and hotels. It also contains maps of cities you will explore. (see below for more details)
- IGN maps of the area (scale 1 cm = 1 km)
- Green Michelin guide (tour guide) of the region
- Emergency phone number available 24/24 and 7/7

Not including

- trip to the departure city of the self-drive tour
- Lunches and dinners (except if written in the tour description)
- Entrances fees to the different tourist sites
- Personal expenses...

Starting and ending cities of tours

Tours start and end in cities or airports where you can easily pick up or return a rental car.

Tours start in the morning of the first day, often with a visit to the city. We recommend you to arrive the day before in the afternoon to better recover from your trip from home.

Tours end in the late afternoon in the last city or airport.

Getting from and away

By car – Perigueux is on RN21 road and nearby A89 motorway (Bordeaux – Brive)

By train – TGV (high speed trains) from Paris-Gare Montparnasse and connection to Perigueux or from Paris-Austerlitz rail station to Limoges and connection to Perigueux (4.30 hours journey)

Trains from Brive La Gaillarde to Paris or Bordeaux without connection.

By plane – Nearest airport is the international Bordeaux airport where you will rent a car to reach Perigueux (130 Km from the airport by motorway) - 220 km from Brive to Bordeaux–Airport (motorway)

Other services

We can book a room for you for the night before or for the last day.

Reservation of rental car

We can offer this tour with accommodation in charming B&B (manors, private chateaux, stylish villas...)

....