

Self drive holidays

SD18 The road to freedom - a return to the epic of the American soldiers in 1944

13-day & 12-night tour

You will follow in the footsteps of the glorious 3rd American Army commanded by General Patton de Cherbourg in Bastogne, Belgium. Imagined as early as 1944 by Guy de la Vasselais to honor the incredible journey of the Americans who will link Normandy to Metz in only 54 days! At each kilometer, a marker testifies to the passage of the liberators. We do not only offer you a historical tour, we offer you to discover or rediscover France with stages combining military history, gastronomy, French history, oenology and architectural heritage. It is a complete tour of the best France has to offer while following in the footsteps of the soldiers who landed in 1944.



Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrival at Cherbourg

Cherbourg, known for its five ports and especially for its first-rate military port, has a lot to offer you. Take the time to discover the city of the sea nestled in the former transatlantic train station, a masterpiece of Art-Deco. You will be able to climb aboard the Redoubtable, the largest submarine that can be visited in the world! Retrace the history of Man and the sea and particularly the Titanic which had stopped in the port of Cherbourg in 1912. An unforgettable visit!



Day 2 - Cherbourg, Sainte-Mère-Eglise, Utah Beach, Carentan and Saint-Lô

After exploring Cherbourg, we drove towards Sainte-Mère-Eglise, known thanks to the American soldier John Steel who unfortunately remained hanging on after having been parachuted on the church bell tower during the Overlord mission. You will find in the village, the first mile marker of the road to freedom. Don't miss the visit of the Airborne museum entirely dedicated to American paratroopers. After this jump into the past, head for Utah Beach, one of the five landing beaches on which hundreds of soldiers landed on June 6, but also General Leclerc's 2nd AD on July 30, 1944. Take the time

to visit the museum that retraces the history of this beach. You will continue your road towards Carentan, considered by General Eisenhower as the key to the landing and which was at the center of the violent clashes between the 101st Airborne Division and the German soldiers. The D-Day experience museum retraces the history of the village but also of the landings. The stage will end in Saint-Lô where you will spend the night.

Day 3 - Saint-Lô – Mont Saint Michel

After the visit of the ancient fortified city and its ramparts, direction Avranches and its Scriptorial which retraces the history of the book, from Egyptian papyrus to digital books. You will also find the manuscripts of the monks of Mont-Saint-Michel. Here you are again on the road to admire and visit the Mount: architectural masterpiece, technical prowess, summum of finesse and elegance rightly called "The Wonder of the West". Then you will visit the city, its ramparts, its narrow streets, its few small squares and its tiny church. You will have lunch on the spot and why not, of a famous omelette of the Mother Poularde whose recipe and way of cooking have been handed down for more than 150 years! It is a jump in time that we propose to you.



Day 4 – Le Mont Saint Michel – Saint-Malo

On the way to the corsair city! To discover Saint Malo, it is already to leave to the adventure! The old town, protected by its ramparts and its castle, is home to numerous mansions and sumptuous granite houses. Famous men, sailors, adventurers, writers or anonymous such as these fishermen on the open sea made the history of this city that you will relive throughout your intramural walk.



Day 5 - Saint-Malo – Rennes – Chateaubriant – Angers

This is a big step you are taking today. After your visit of Saint-Malo, direction Rennes and its superb historical center! You will also be able to discover the last Army museum dedicated to the transmissions and its History. Take the time to stroll in its city center to discover the vestiges of our past. You will take the road again in the direction of Châteaubriant and its castle but also of the Carrière des Fusillés, a free memorial route that pays tribute to the 27 people shot in reprisal for the assassination of a German lieutenant colonel in 1941. Your day ends in Angers where you will spend the night.

Day 6 – Angers – Le Mans

Angers ranked first city where it is good to live offers multiple faces. Its imposing fortified castle is worth a visit, as is its museum of fine arts or the Saint Maurice cathedral. Take the time to stroll in its historical center before taking the road towards Le Mans where you will spend the night.



Day 7–Le Mans - Chartres

Head to the museum and the Le Mans 24 hour racetrack which make the city famous and admire the superb collector cars it houses. Then direction the Gallo-Roman enclosure which protected the city of Plantagenêt for more than fifteen centuries and which is considered as the best preserved enclosure after that of Rome and Byzantium! A visit of the historical center is obligatory before reaching Chartres and its extraordinary cathedral.

Day 8 –Chartres - Fontainebleau

Impossible to go to Chartres without visiting its cathedral considered as the most representative of the Gothic and especially the best preserved. Built in the 13th century on the ruins of a previous Romanesque cathedral destroyed in 1194! High place of pilgrimage, it dominates Chartres and the Beauce and is visible more than ten kilometers away. It will be classified in 1979 in the world heritage of UNESCO. Before leaving Chartres and after strolling in its old center, make a small detour to the Picassiette house built in pieces of earthenware and porcelain! It's time to reach Fontainebleau and its superb castle, handed down from sovereign to sovereign from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. More than 800 years of History which makes it the most furnished castle in France, you will be able to discover more than 1500 pieces of art! Do not hesitate to walk through the 130 hectares of parks and gardens for a gentle end of day before reaching your hotel.



Day 9 –Fontainebleau - Provins

After a last tour in the city, direction Provins, the medieval city. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as the only witness to the Champagne Fairs of the 12th and 13th centuries, the city offers you a leap into the unique past! Discover its heritage, the Caesar Tower, the Grange aux dîmes (Tithe Barn) or the Provins Museum. In all the city is held of the spectacles to make you discover the daily life in the Middle Ages, irrefutable!



Day 10 – Provins - Reims

Today, direction Reims and its vineyards. We advise you to stop on the way to discover excellent cellars and stock up on champagne! In Reims, it's impossible to miss the cathedral, which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in the 13th century, it is known to be the cathedral in which 33 sovereigns were consecrated over the centuries! Stroll through the narrow streets of the city before visiting the greatest houses of Champagne. It is a day full of History and oenological discoveries that we offer you.

Day 11 – Reims - Verdun

After having followed like the 9 previous days, the way of freedom, you arrive in a high place of our History: Verdun. We advise you to go to the tourist office to buy the Battlefield Pass which will allow you to visit the 5 essential sites of Verdun: the Memorial of Verdun, the Fort and Ossuary of Douaumont, the underground Citadel and the Fort of Vaux. A day rich in emotion and learning awaits you.

Day 12 – Verdun- Metz - Luxembourg

Today you will take the road in the direction of Metz first of all. Direction the Pompidou Center built in 2010 it is one of the most visited French museums outside of Paris. A true architectural masterpiece, it is entirely dedicated to modern and contemporary art. Don't miss this marvel of modernity! After a walk through the center of Metz, discover the Porte des Allemands, a small fortified castle with free access. After this day full of discoveries, you will leave France for Luxembourg, still in the footsteps of the allies.

Day 13 – Luxembourg - Bastogne

After a walk in the city center of Luxembourg you will leave in the direction of the Casemates du Bock, tunnels that were used to hide and protect themselves during the bombings. Take a breath of fresh air while strolling along the Corniche path for a great walk along the river up to the Porte de Grund which will offer a superb view of the city's facades and roofs. You will then take your car to drive the last few kilometers to Belgium in the direction of Bastogne where you will spend the night.



Day 14 – Bastogne

To start the day, go to the famous Mardasson memorial, place of memory of the Battle of the Bulge, which honors the memory of the American combatants who fell on Belgian soil. Soak up this unique place before joining the Bastogne War Museum which offers visitors an immersive experience in the heart of the Battle of the Bulge. Bastogne is full of museums dedicated to the Second World War such as the 101 Airborne Museum or the Bastogne Barracks. These visits will conclude your tour along the road to freedom, following in the footsteps of the soldiers following Patton whose sculpture you will find in the center of Bastogne. End of the tour (possibility of an extra night in Bastogne, please contact us).



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 circuit, we propose 2 formulas which differ by the quality and the classification of the hotels. You will find below the list of the hotels where you will stay, subject to availability at the time of registration.

Luxe Self drive holidays SD18-L – 4-star hotels

Comfort Self drive holidays SD18-C – 3-star hotels

Price includes

- 13 nights in formula night and breakfast in hotels that we have selected among the best in their category.
- Detailed road book, villages, sites to visit and hotels. You will also find maps of the cities crossed or pedestrian circuits of cities to be discovered. The IGN maps of the region at 1/1000000e (1 cm = 1Km)
- The Michelin green guide(s) (tourist guide) of the region
- A michelin map identical to the 1944 one with the route taken by the americans
- An emergency number available 24/7

Not including

- trip to the departure city of the self-drive tour
- Lunches and dinners
- 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.

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

Getting from and away

By car - Paris – Cherbourg by l'A13

By train – Direct trains from Paris Saint Lazare To Cherbourg (about 3.30 hours' journey).

By plane – the nearest international airport is Paris Charles de Gaulle where you will rent a car to drive to Cherbourg