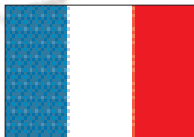


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France: Cathedrals, Châteaux
& Champagne

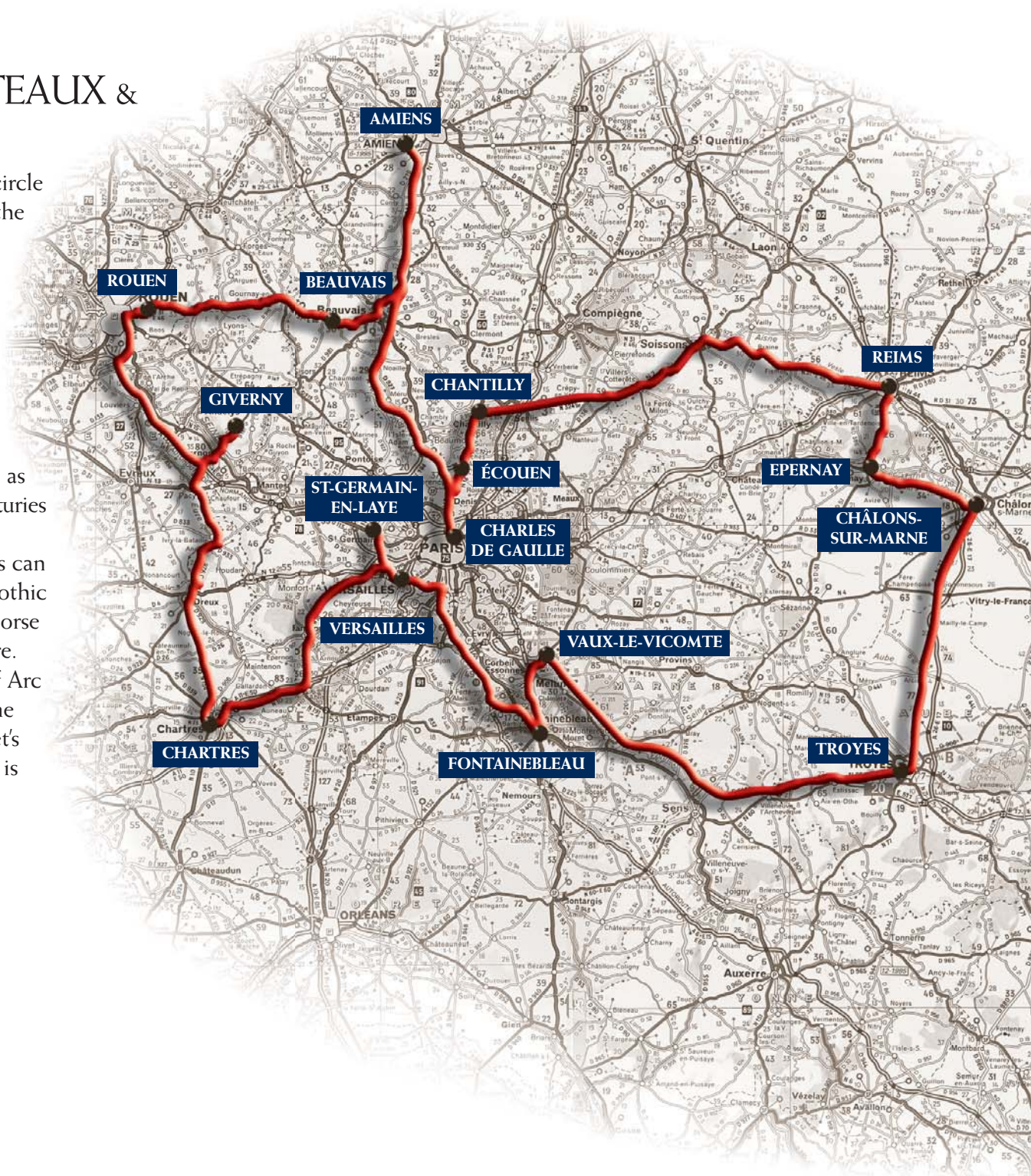
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FRANCE: CATHEDRALS, CHÂTEAUX & CHAMPAGNE

ON THIS TOUR, you'll make a grand circle around Paris, visiting cathedrals and the great châteaux, as well as tasting the finest champagne in the world. You'll travel through the Ile de France, an area beloved by French royalty, who built the great châteaux of Fontainebleau, Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles here. It's an area where you stroll through the formal gardens of André le Nôtre, which are as appealing now as they were three centuries ago. Later, you'll explore the caves of Champagne, where the great vintages can be tasted. There's an abundance of Gothic cathedrals, a museum to horses and horse racing, and medieval streets to explore. You'll walk in the footsteps of Joan of Arc and Gustave Flaubert, inhabit Madame Bovary's world, and see Claude Monet's beloved water lilies. This exploration is for those who love France's majestic architectural heritage, its very best vineyards and its well-preserved past.



CATHEDRALS, CHÂTEAUX & CHAMPAGNE

(*Mileage is estimated from each preceding city or site. Before you begin your trip, please note: For space reasons, we could not provide the most detailed map with this brochure. We recommend the use of Michelin Map #721 France in conjunction with this guide.*) To order Michelin maps, call 1-800-223-0987.

CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT—

The major gateway to Paris and the rest of France, the airport lies northeast of Paris and is a fine starting point for an exploration of the Ile de France, Champagne and beyond.

11 miles

CHÂTEAU D'ÉCOUEN— This château set on 42 acres is the home of the superb Musée National de la Renaissance. It is an amazing collection of decorative arts from the 16th and 17th centuries, including furniture, tapestries and ceramics. And the ambience of the château is very much in keeping with the period. For scholars, the highlight of the château is its painted fireplaces. They are representative of the Fontainebleau School, a 16th-century team founded by Rosso, one of Michelangelo's pupils.

13 miles

CHANTILLY— Take a great château, a racetrack and a forest and you have Chantilly. Chantilly's Grande Château and the Petit Château now comprise the Musée Condé. It is an astonishing collection, consisting of masterpieces from the likes of Poussin, Botticelli and Raphael and the famed illuminated manuscript, *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc du Berry*. Adjacent are the Grand Écuries, vast 18th-century stables that now house the Musée

Vivant du Cheval et du Poney. You can see a vast collection of riding memorabilia here, including Hermès riding ephemera, as well as see more than two dozen saddle and draught horses. If you're here in June, try and get seats to the nearby Chantilly race-track. That's when the Prix du Jockey-Club and the Prix de Diane-Hermès are run.

97 miles

REIMS— Reims is beloved by connoisseurs as the home of champagne. You can take a guided cellar tour of such champagne houses as Louis Roederer, Ruinart, Lanson, Taittinger, Charles Heidsieck and Pommery. Their vast cellars have been carved out of the chalk underneath the city. The other highlight of Reims is the glorious Cathédrale Notre-Dame. All of the kings of France from the 11th century onward were crowned here, giving Reims its renown as "the city of coronations." The present Gothic structure was begun in 1211. Among the highlights are the Great Rose Window, which dates from the 13th century and shows the Virgin Mary surrounded by the apostles and angels. In a church with many depictions of angels, the most beloved of all is a statue known as the "Smiling Angel."

17 miles

EPERNAY— Another town synonymous with great champagne, where the star attraction is Moët et Chandon. On the appropriately named Avenue du Champagne, you'll find the house of Moët as well as Mercier. The latter has an electric train to take you through the vast chalk caves.

21 miles

CHÂLONS-SUR-MARNE— A classic French town of half-timbered houses, impeccable gardens and lazy canals.

There's no better place to enjoy a glass of Blancs de Blancs, which is produced nearby, than in one of the cafés at Place de la République.

The medieval quarter of town is well worth exploring, as is the Musée du Cloître de Notre-Dame-en-Vaux. The adja-

cent church, Notre-Dame-en-Vaux, is a brilliant example of the Romanesque-Gothic style. Wander to Le Petit Jard, a riverfront garden that overlooks the Château du Marché. This tollgate, complete with turrets, was built by Henri IV.

52 miles

TROYES— If you're a fan of Gothic churches, you've come to the right place. Troyes has an abundance of them, from the Cathédrale St-Pierre-et-St-Paul, an example of the so-called Flamboyant Gothic style, to the Basilique St-Urbain, with its textbook examples of flying buttresses. But you're still in Champagne, and you'll discover that the historic center of Troyes is, in fact, shaped like a champagne cork. Explore the 16th-century courtyards, lunch on one of the local "andouillettes" sausages and ponder the Fauvist paintings at the Musée d'Art Moderne.

76 miles

CHÂTEAU DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE— There are those who prefer the grace and elegance of Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte to that of Versailles. It was the dream project of Nicolas Fouquet, Louis XIV's finance minister, who demanded a lavish palace from architect Louis Le Vau and decorator Charles Le Brun. They succeeded brilliantly. The exterior is harmonious and perfectly grand, while the interior is a feast of frescoes, stucco and statuary. Yet somehow, the scale is not overwhelming. La Grande Chambre Carrée, for example, is a Louis XIII-style room, with a triumphal frieze that recalls Roman glories. And the Salon des Muses features Charles Le Brun's frescoed ceilings of dancing nymphs. But the gardens, designed by André Le Nôtre, the great French landscape designer, may be the best of all. The terraces, fountains and artificial lakes, along with the box hedges and topiary, are the essence of the "jardin à la française" style. Alas, Vaux-le-Vicomte was too beautiful, and the jealous Louis XIV arrested



Fouquet and confiscated all of his property. The hapless Fouquet later died in prison while Louis XIV enlisted Le Vau, Le Brun and Le Nôtre to build his masterpiece, Versailles.

14 miles

CHÂTEAU DE FONTAINEBLEAU— Unlike Vaux-le-Vicomte, Château de Fontainebleau is not the work of a single architectural visionary. Instead, it is a pastiche of medieval and Renaissance styles. Much of it was transformed for François I into a style the Renaissance king found pleasing, a melange of Florentine and Roman styles. It is far less formal than Versailles or Vaux-le-Vicomte and has all sorts of architectural delights, such as the horseshoe-shaped grand staircase. You can see Napoléon's throne in the Salle du Trône, stroll through the cypress trees in the Jardin Anglais and visit nearby Barbizon. It was here, in the 1840s, that a group of painters who would come to be known as the Barbizon School painted from nature in the glades around Fontainebleau. Rousseau and Millet are probably the best-known members of the school.

44 miles

CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES— You could spend days exploring Versailles, arguably the greatest palace ever constructed. Begun by Louis XIV in 1668 as an expansion of Louis XIII's hunting lodge, it grew into a vast palace that became the center of French government from 1682 to 1789. Louis Le Vau and Charles Le Brun, of Vaux-le-Vicomte fame, were hired by Louis XIV, as was André Le Nôtre. Jules Hardouin-Mansart was appointed head architect in 1678. It was decades before Versailles was completed, and Louis XIV was 72 when the final chapel was completed. Le Brun spared no excess when it came to marble, gilt and wood carvings. Perhaps the most famous space is the Hall of Mirrors, where the Treaty of Versailles was ratified in 1919, ending World War I. Outside, the vast waterworks and formal gardens created by Le Nôtre seem to go



on forever. As you're strolling, note that the Petit Trianon, a small chateau on the grounds, was a favorite retreat of Marie Antoinette's.

8 miles

ST-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE— Now a smart Parisian suburb, St-Germain-en-Laye was the birthplace of Louis XIV, at Château de St-Germain. You can walk along the terraces of The Château on the slopes overlooking the Seine. The work of Le Nôtre, the Grand Terrace in particular is a delight. Finished in 1673, it is lined with lime trees and offers one of the most civilized strolls in France. Inside the Château, you'll find the Musée des Antiquités Nationales, a solid collection of archeological finds from the Paleolithic Age to the Middle Ages. If you have time, stop at the Priory Museum, which was once the home of painter Maurice Denis. It is now the museum for the Nabi group of painters, whose numbers included Denis as well as Sérusier, Bonnard and Vuillard.

50 miles

CHARTRES— In a country filled with great Gothic cathedrals, the Cathédrale de Chartres is arguably the greatest. Originally a Romanesque structure when it was built in 1020, it was destroyed by fire in 1194. It was reconstructed in a mere 25 years, with peasants and royalty working side-by-side. The tallest spire is Flamboyant Gothic in style, its shorter counterpart a subdued Romanesque example. The Gothic nave is 121 feet high, with a 13th-century labyrinth inlaid in the floor. In emulation of the suffering of Jesus, pilgrims in the Middle Ages would follow the maze on their knees, a torturous journey that took at least one hour to complete. The stained-glass windows are masterpieces in themselves. Leaving the cathedral, you can explore the cobbled streets of Chartres, with their half-timbered houses, and walk down the steep staircases called "tertres" to the Eure River.

55 miles

GIVERNY— You'll be delighted to find that Claude Monet's lavish garden has the water lilies, the carpet of nasturtiums and

the wisteria that you'd expect. The painter lived here from 1883 until his death in 1926. You can stroll through the large studio where he painted his water lily canvases, and see the bright yellow kitchen. The works on display are reproductions, but it matters not, because you still get a true sense of how it was when Monet lived, painted and planted here.

40 miles

ROUEN— If Rouen seems familiar, it may be due to your close reading of *Madam Bovary*. That novel has some wonderful scenes of Rouen, which is not surprising, given that its author, Gustave Flaubert, was a native. By all means stop at Musée Flaubert, the house where Flaubert lived. It even has the stuffed parrot that perched on his writing desk. If Rouen's Cathédrale Notre-Dame with its imposing Gothic facade also gives you a shiver of recognition, it may be because Monet painted it so many times. Inside this beautiful cathedral is the tomb of Richard the Lion-Heart. As you stroll through Rouen, pause at Place du Vieux-Marché, where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. Spend some time at the Musée de la Céramique, with its fine exhibits of Rouen faience, a colorful glazed earthenware. And wander along the shops and cafes on Rue de Carmes.

51 miles

BEAUVAIS— The Cathédrale St-Pierre is the gem of Beauvais. This Gothic wonder was begun in 1227 but not completed until the late 16th century. Wars, lack of funding and a vaulted ceiling that caved in twice caused the delays. It rises nearly 1,600 feet high. Take your time here, to see the 16th-century stained glass and an elaborate 19th-century astronomical clock.

38 miles

AMIENS— The Cathédrale Notre-Dame is Amiens' claim to fame. The largest cathedral in France, it was begun in 1220. It was built to house the head of St. John the Baptist, which had been brought back from the Crusades in 1206. That relic is still on display in the Treasury. The Cathédrale was restored by 19th-century architect and champion of the Gothic

style, Viollet-le-Duc. It survived both World Wars, and its extraordinary array of statuary is as memorable as its harmonious architecture. You can end your day wandering through the St-Leu quarter, with its canals and waterside restaurants.

N.B. Approximate mileage Amiens to Paris Charles de Gaulle airport is 80 miles

HOTELS

Relais d' Aumale. Close to Chantilly, this 24-room inn is the former hunting lodge of the Duke of Aumale. Located in the heart of the Chantilly forest, it has retained the charm of a bygone era. 37 place des Fêtes, Montgresin. Tel: 33-03-44-54-61-31 Fax: 33-03-44-54-69-15

Royal Champagne. This former coach inn offers more than 200 exceptional champagnes of various vintages. The 29 guest rooms offer wonderful views of the vineyards and the Marne valley. 51160 Champillon-Epernay. Tel: 33-03-26-52-87-11 Fax: 33-03-26-52-89-69 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478

Grand Hôtel De L'Aigle Noir. Of the 56 rooms, the best ones have views overlooking the garden or the château. The restaurant, Le Beauharnais, serves imaginative cuisine. 27 Place Napoléon-Bonaparte, Fontainebleau. Tel: 33-01-60-74-60-00 Fax: 33-01-60-74-60-01

Trianon Palace, A Westin Hotel. Located on the edge of Louis XIV's Royal Domain, this 190-room historic hotel was extensively renovated in 2001. Chef Gérard Vié oversees "Les Trois Marches" restaurant. 1 Boulevard de la Reine, Versailles. Tel: 33-01-30-84-50-00 Fax: 33-01-30-84-50-01 For reservations in the USA: 888-625-5144

Cazaudehore et "La Forestière." Nestled among rose gardens and forest groves, this idyllic hotel offers 25 comfortable guest rooms and five guest apartments. The innovative cuisine is sophisticated,



the dining room and garden both delightful spots. 1 av. du Président Kennedy, St-Germain-en-Laye. Tel: 33-01-30-61-64-64 Fax: 33-01-39-73-73-88 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478

Boyer "Les Crayeres." One of France's great chefs, Gérard Boyer, runs one of France's great hotels with his wife, Elyane. The château has just 19 guest rooms, and Boyer has dazzled visitors with his cuisine for years, justifiably earning three Michelin stars. 64, bd. Henry-Vasnier, Reims. Tel: 33-03-26-82-80-80 Fax: 33-03-26-82-65-52 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478

RESTAURANT

Restaurant Gill. On the quays not far from the cathedral, Gilles and Sylvie Tournadre create inventive dishes. Based on the local products of Normandy, their restaurant offers an elegant retreat. 8-9, quai de la Bourse, Rouen. Tel: 33-02-35-71-16-14 Fax: 33-02-35-71-96-91 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478



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