



8 Day Paris & Alsace Cheese Tour

General de Gaulle, in one of his memorable sayings once said "How can you govern a country that has 246 varieties of cheese?" What he meant by that was not quite clear - whether he was commenting on France or on its cheeses; yet this remark has gone down in history among the General's most memorable quotations. What he probably meant was that France as a country is as diverse as its cheeses - or vice-versa. And just as France is physically the most varied country in Europe, so its cheeses reflect this wide and rich cultural diversity.

Let Destination Artisans take you on this 8 day tour where you will visit Alsace, the region of the *Munster* cheese and Paris to taste the *Brie* cheese.

Alsace, is one of the most beautiful regions in France and one of many contrasts. Although modest in size, Alsace's geography is such that it offers an incredible variety of landscapes and climates. This geographical richness also contributes to the diversity of the region's local products. Chiefly comprised of plains and hills, the region offers breathtaking vistas.

Munster cheese is made with cow's milk and is said to be the smelliest cheese in the world. It originated in the 10th and 11th centuries in the valley that gave it its name. Legend has it, it was invented by the monks of the Benedictine Abbey of Munster (the Monastery). This cheese was one of the contributions that farmers had to provide to the Munster convent or to other lords of the land. Munster is a round cheese with a soft inside, with an orange skin. Its odour is distinctive and its taste sharp, without being strong. It can be eaten in different ways: simply sprinkled with cumin seeds or with bibelasskäs. Bibelasskäs is a white-cheese dish that is eaten with Munster and hot potatoes. Traditionally, the local wine to accompany Munster cheese is Gewurztraminer, a slightly sweet and floral white wine, but it goes well with beer as well.



Brie Cheese - The Brie de Meaux, manufactured outside of Paris since the 8th century, was originally known as the "King's Cheese" (later, following the French Revolution, the "King of Cheeses") and was enjoyed by the peasantry and nobility alike. It was granted the protection of AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) status in 1980, and is produced primarily in the eastern part of the Parisian basin. On this tour you will also visit a Brie cheese farm.

Day 1 - Arrival to Paris

Discovering the City of Light and making it your own has always been the most compelling reason to visit Paris. You'll discover classic sights as the Tour Eiffel, Notre-Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, the Sacré-Coeur, and all of those charming cafés. Don't forget the parks, gardens, and squares, the Champs-Élysées and other grand boulevards, the river Seine and its quays. Paris's beauty is still overwhelming, especially at night, when it truly is the City of Light.

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Upon your arrival into Paris CDG airport, you will be transferred to the Keppler Hotel. We have arranged a welcome reception for you where you will meet our Destination Artisans tour co-ordinator who will be at your service to assist you for the duration of your time in France. A very smart and sophisticated hotel around the corner from one of the most well know boulevards of Paris, the Champs Elysees. The location of this hotel coupled with its chic style makes it the ideal hotel to stay when in Paris.





Day 2 - Paris Sightseeing & Cheese Tasting

1.00 PM After lunch your guide and driver will meet you in the lobby of your hotel for your half-day orientation tour of Paris. Some of the highlights you will see on the **Right Bank** are: the Arc de Triomphe, Champs Elysees, Place de la Concorde, Tuileries Gardens, Opera Garnier, Notre Dame Cathedral, City Hall and Bastille square with it's modern Opera, the Marais area and time permitting a stop at Montmartre. On the **Left Bank** you will see the Eiffel Tower, Invalides, Saint Germain des Pres, Luxembourg Gardens, Pantheon, Sorbonne, and the Ile Saint Louis.



5.00 PM After the tour you will have your own private cheese tasting at Pain, Vin, Fromage Restaurant. Frederic Motte your Cheese Master will explain 6 different cheeses classed from the very soft to the very strong, accompanied by a glass of wine. At the end of the 'degustation' you may like to stay on for dinner, or return to your hotel with your coach.



You may like to visit the shop Androuet for the best cheese selection in Paris. The closest outlets to your hotel are:

**17, rue des Belles Feuilles - Paris 16e
1, rue Bois le Vent - Paris 16e**

Overnight at the Keppler Hotel (B)

Day 3 - Paris - Full day of sight seeing and cheese tasting

09:00 AM This morning after breakfast your coach will be waiting for you to take you firstly to Vaux le Vicomte. The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte is a baroque French château built from 1658 to 1661 for Nicolas Fouquet, Marquis de Belle Île, Viscount of Melun and Vaux, the superintendent of finances of Louis XIV.

The château was in many ways the most influential work built in Europe in the mid-17th century and the most elaborate and grand house built in France after the Château de Maisons. At Vaux-le-Vicomte, the architect Louis Le Vau, the landscape architect André le Nôtre, and the painter-decorator Charles Le Brun worked together on a large-scale project for the first time. Their collaboration marked the beginning of a new order: the magnificent manner that is



associated with the "Louis XIV style" involving a system of collective work, which could be applied to the structure, its interiors and works of art and the creation of an entire landscape.



After lunch (out of pocket) you will visit a cheese farm specialising in Brie cheese. The production area of Brie de Meaux lies about 50 km east of Paris. Brie de Meaux is an ancient cheese. The oldest evidence is found in the chronicles of Charlemagne. The Emperor tasted the cheese in the small city of Brie in the year 774. During the French Revolution, Louis XVI last wish was supposedly for a final taste of Brie. In 1814, the Prince de Talleyrand organised a European tournament during the Congress of Vienna. Brie de Meaux was awarded the first prize and declared "Le Roi des Fromages" (The King of Cheeses). Of the many types, Brie de Meaux is probably the finest, and most widely the best known.

Brie making requires about 25 litres of pasteurized cow's milk to make one Brie de Meaux cheese. According to tradition, the cheese is cast manually with the help of a "pelle à brie" (perforated ladle/shovel). The cheese is then salted, exclusively with dry salt.

When you taste Brie de Meaux, it has the sweetness one would expect from a top world's cheese and delivers a very soft combination of hazelnut and fruit aromas. Brie is a perfect match with Champagne.



At the farm you will visit the museum, see a video presentation on the fabrication of brie cheese, take a tour of the refining cellars, and taste three types of cheeses accompanied with farmhouse bread and a glass of wine from the region Bordeaux.

Return and overnight at the Keppler Hotel (B)

Day 4 - Paris - Strasbourg

This morning you will be transferred to Gare de l'Est for your 1st class TGV train to Strasbourg. Upon arrival our driver will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel, the Regent Contades. Situated in a unique location along the banks of the Ill River in the heart of the city in a landmark 19th century building. Only two minutes away from the cathedral and right next to Saint Paul Church.



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Situated on the Franco-German border, lovely Strasbourg has been passed back and forward between the two countries for years. The result is a city and people with a distinctive local identity, combining the reputed efficiency and energy of the Germans with the joie de vivre and sophistication of the French. Its symbolic significance as a major European city was confirmed when it was chosen as the seat of the Council of Europe in 1949, the European Court of Human Rights in 1994 and, finally guaranteed in 1992, the European Parliament.

The rest of the day will be at your leisure.



Destination Artisans dinner suggestion: 'Crocodile', a two-Michelin star restaurant or one of the many brasseries specialised in Alsatian choucroutes. Trying an Alsatian specialty is a must while in Strasbourg.

Overnight at the Regent Contades Hotel (B)

Day 5 - Strasbourg - Full day sightseeing

09:30 AM Today you will enjoy a morning cruise and an afternoon city tour. After breakfast, you will embark on a 90 minute bateaux-mouche cruise along Strasbourg's canals. Following lunch (out of pocket), you have a guided visit of Strasbourg.



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The Grande Ile (Big Island), in the midst of the River Ill, is the ancient heart of the city, with the vast main square, place Kléber, at its center. Close by is place Gutenberg - named after 15th-century Strasbourg resident Johannes Gutenberg, famed for his development of printing.

Strasbourg's great landmark is the Cathédrale Notre-Dame in the Vieille Ville (Old Town), which has remained unchanged since the Middle Ages. Around the Cathedral clusters an impressive array of museums, cafes and restaurants.

The city center's attractive main shopping streets Rue des Grandes Arcades and parallel Rue des Francs Bourgeois are remarkably small and pedestrian friendly. Stunningly picturesque Petite France, in the Grande Ile's southwestern corner, is Strasbourg's medieval quarter and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. With its bridges and canals, half-timbered houses and narrow streets, it could not be more different from the ultra-modern City of Europe in northeast Strasbourg where the EU institutions are located.

During the afternoon tour, you'll enjoy several gourmet stops, including at the traditional pastry shop "the Paradise of Gingerbreads" dating from 1643.

Dinner tonight will be at the La Cloche à Fromage. *The* cheese restaurant in Strasbourg, you will enjoy a 4 course dinner tonight (drinks included) especially prepared for the group.



Menu Example:

Aperitif:

A glass of Kir d'Alsace à la crème de mûre

First course :

A discovery of 7 cheeses (all farm made and unpasteurized) from sweetest to strongest tastes and presented by the Cheese Master.

Second course :

Duck foie gras escalopes on honey roasted gingerbreads

Main course:

Vacherin Mont d'Or, a cheese dish that comes from the Jura region of France and is cooked with white wine in a pine wood box and is served with cold meat and potatoes.

OR

Raclette, a cheese dish using a matured mountain cheese made with white wine and served with pickles, potatoes & cold cuts.

Dessert:

Black chocolate fondue served with fresh fruits

OR



Special homemade cheese ice cream with 3 different flavours.

Espresso Coffee

Drinks

1 bottle of wine for 2 persons

1 bottle of mineral water for 2 persons

Overnight at the Regent Contades Hotel (B,D)

Day 6 - Strasbourg - One day tour along the Cheese Route

9:00 AM Your guide and driver will be waiting for you in the lobby of your hotel. Your first visit will be at Liepvre which is in the high Vosges mountains. There you will visit your first cheese farm, where you will have a visit and tasting of Tommes cheese and butter. (cow cheese) From here you will then head across the route des Cretes, the highest road of the Vosges mountains and arrive at Auberge du Steinlebach farm. Here you will take a tour of the munster cheese production with a tasting at the end.

Lunch will be served here, an authentic farmer's lunch (beverages not included).

After lunch, we will head back to Strasbourg, making a final stop at Griesheim where you will visit your final cheese farm, a goat cheese farm. Once again you will have a guided visit and tasting.

You will arrive back to your hotel at approximately 6.00 PM.





Overnight at the Regent Contades Hotel (B,L)

Day 7 - Strasbourg -One day cycling tour to the vineyards of Alsace

9.00 AM This morning you will be collected from your hotel for a day of cycling along the Wine Route. The group will start from the hotel along the Canal de la Bruche, a wonderful ride that is very easy and flat. At 12.30 pm you will stop for a picnic lunch along the banks of the canal. After lunch you will continue cycling until Molsheim, a pretty Alsatian village along the Wine Route. You will then stop and enjoy a wine tasting at around 3.30 pm. After the wine tasting your coach will return you back to the hotel.

Included are:

- 21 speed fully equipped hybrid bicycles and helmets
- assistance of English speaking guides and a support vehicle
- mineral water and energy bars
- wine tasting at a local winery
- gourmet picnic lunch including wine, beer and soft drinks



Tonight's dinner will be at Le Baeckeoffe d'Alsace restaurant, located in the heart of old Strasbourg in the Petite France. This traditional Alsatian "Winstub" restaurant offers diners this regional casserole dish as it's speciality. (Drinks not included)



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The menu tonight will include:

Entrée of Choice

Baeckeoffe of Choice with a green salad

OR

Bibeleskas, a soft white cheese, with sauté potatoes and traditional Alsatian Munster

OR

Main of Choice

Dessert of Choice



Overnight at the Regent Contades Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 8 - Strasbourg - Paris - CDG

After breakfast you will be transferred to the train station for your TGV train back to Paris or CDG airport.



VIP Customised Package Includes:

- Private transfer from CDG to hotel
- 3 nights accommodation at the Keppler Hotel including daily breakfast and taxes in an executive room (based on double/twin share)
- Half day privately guided tour of Paris
- Private cheese tasting with Cheese Master at Pin, Vin, Fromage restaurant
- A full day touring visiting Vault le Vicomte Castle including entrance tickets, followed by a tour of a Brie cheese factory including tasting
- Transfer to train station from Paris hotel
- Transfer from train station to Strasbourg hotel
- 1st class return TGV ticket Paris/Strasbourg/Paris
- 5 nights accommodation at the Regent Contades Hotel including daily breakfast and taxes in a deluxe room (based on twin/double share)
- Full day touring of Strasbourg including a cruise along the canals and a walking half day tour of the city with a private guide
- 4 course dinner at the La Cloche à Fromage including return transfers with drinks included
- Full day touring along the 'cheese route' with private guide including lunch
- Full day bicycle tour along the 'wine route' with return coach transfers back to your hotel including a picnic lunch
- Dinner at the Le Baekeoffe d'Alsace restaurant including return transfers (drinks not included)
- Transfer from hotel to Strasbourg train station
- Transfer from Paris train station to either hotel or CDG airport

Not included in the Costing:

- *Meals other than indicated
- *Gratuities
- *Wine & cheese tastings other than indicated
- *Airfare from Australia

PLEASE NOTE: This is a small group tour for 8 people travelling together including your Cheese Expert and your Destination Artisans Tour Leader
