



The Languedoc



95 Adams St.,
Keene, NH 03431



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

New for Autumn 2015:

The Reykjavik Marathon, Aug 20 – 24
Cheer on runners from Tufts University.

Stately Homes, Part II, Aug 31 – Sept 9
We still visit Highclere Castle, but we focus on houses in the south of England.

Treasure Houses of N England, Sept 8 – 17
Visiting stately homes from Yorkshire to the Lake District. Can be added to the trip above.

England's West Country, Sept 10 – 19
London to Land's End by train and then winding our way back by road.

Treasures of Cathar Country, Sept 17 – 26
Stays at the Chateau de Camon and the Relais des 3 Mas in Collioure highlight this trip.

Important Houses of Norfolk, Sept 20 – 28
An in-depth exploration of the stately homes of East Anglia with Nicholas Merchant.

Treasures of Northern Italy, Sept 20 – Oct 3
The Italian Lakes to Venice and the Cinque Terre with the Rev. John Rogers.

The Scottish Lowlands, Sept 25 – Oct 4
Glasgow to Robbie Burns' country, the borders and the Wigtown Book Festival.

Sicily: Island Crossroads, Sept 29 – Oct 9
This ancient island has been home to the many civilizations of the Mediterranean. With an optional extension to the Aeolian Islands.

Linger in the Languedoc, Oct 2 – 10
An extended stay at the Abbaye Chateau de Camon with day trips exploring the region from Carcassonne to the Pyrenees.

Kent: Garden of England, Oct 8 – 17
Canterbury, Dover, Gardens, Dickens, Kings and Castles, History and Hops.

Autumn in Tuscany, Oct 16 – 24
From our base in Montecatini Terme, we take trips into the Tuscan countryside.

The Glory of Greece, Oct 22 – 31
Athens, Corinth, Mycenae and Delphi - the highlights of mainland Greece.

For detailed itineraries, contact **Discover Europe** toll-free at 866-563-7077; e-mail at discovereurope@earthlink.net; or our web site at www.discovereuropeltd.com.

Group Travel for Individuals

At **Discover Europe** we strive to create rich travel experiences with a difference. Each unique tour is limited to 5 – 15 people and guided by an expert with a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm. But don't just take our word for it; here's a sample of what some recent travelers had to say about their tours and/or tour guides:

We've traveled a lot and had many wonderful experiences. Discover Europe is one of the best. We really enjoy the off the beaten track itineraries.

Joan & Don Burns, *Linger in the Languedoc*

The unique access to these stately homes is wonderful! We are not sure how it is done, but we were guests rather than tourists

Roger & Betty Smith, *Stately Homes, Part II*

What a beautiful holiday we had! I love the south-west of France; the food, villages, architecture, art, crafts, markets. Everything. The Chateau de Camon is indeed fabulous, as are Peter, Katie, and the rest of the staff. I loved the whole place.

Jo Ann Gresso, *The Treasures of Southwest France*

Discover Europe offers a wide selection of well-crafted itineraries, but we will also customize a trip to your specifications. Whether it's a family reunion, a business trip, a school vacation, or simply a celebration, we can help you plan the ultimate escape to Europe.

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A Happy Traveler



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Into the HEART of EUROPE

THE NEWSLETTER OF DISCOVER EUROPE LTD.



POSTCARD FROM THE LANGUEDOC

So, have you ever wondered, what exactly is the "Languedoc?" Why is it called that? And where is it exactly? Ever since I spent a summer just north of Beziers when I was in my early twenties, I knew I loved the region, but it wasn't until recent visits in the last couple of years that I really began to feel that I was beginning to grasp what it was that made it so special.

"What's in a name?" questioned the bard of Avon - quite a lot, say I, and many other philologists! The Languedoc, for example, is really the "langue d'oc" - literally, the language of "yes." Fantastic! A region whose name means the language of yes - James Joyce is alive and well and living in Carcassonne! Well not exactly. You see, back in the 12th and 13th centuries, France wasn't really a country in the way we think of it now. Let's not forget that half of it was owned by the English (either through inheritance from the Duke of Normandy, or through the marriage of Henry II to Eleanor of Aquitaine) and that the "King of France" in Paris really had very little practical control over most of the rest of the country. They didn't even all speak the same language.



Montsegur Castle

In the north from Calais (an English city until 1558) almost all the way to Lyon, the language that was spoken was very different from that which was common throughout the south. The two were differentiated by the word they used for "yes" - in the north "oil" and in the south "oc" - hence the langue d'oïl and the langue d'oc. This also leads to another name for the region, the Occitane - from the lingua occitania, the land where the people use the word "oc."

Whenever people speak a different language, it is harder to understand them. This lack of understanding naturally breeds fear and resentment. Rather than make the effort to learn their language, and the customs and culture that are an integral part of that language, it is much less mental effort to take up arms and go and slaughter them. This is what happened in the Languedoc at the beginning of the 13th century.

The excuse that was used at the time was that the population of the south was espousing a heresy, known as the Albigensian heresy, from its roots in the city of Albi, just north of Toulouse. Today we refer to them as the Cathars, although we should remember that this was not a term that they used at the time. Very little is known for sure about the actual beliefs of the Albigensians, mainly due to the effectiveness of the campaign of suppression waged against them by the Catholic church. Such was the thoroughness of the burning of their texts that virtually no examples have survived.

What we do know of their doctrine makes it quite easy to understand its appeal - especially given the context of the corrupt



Dinner at the Chateau de Camon

So look for our new address all over this newsletter and check out our trip offerings for 2015; remember, nothing says "Merry Christmas" like a trip to Europe!

Michael Induni, President

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practices endemic in the Catholic church at the time. The rejection of material wealth demonstrated by the “bonhommes” (literally “good men,” as the followers of the faith were known), stood in stark contrast to the grasping materialism so evident in the established church. But there was another reason for its widespread popularity – services were conducted, not in Latin as in the Catholic church (a language that only the very few educated classes were able to understand), but in the local dialect. The langue d’oc.

The story of the brutality of the so-called Albigensian Crusades of the early 13th century is one of the darker periods in the history of the Christian church. When asked how he would separate the heretics from the loyal Catholics in the siege of the city of Beziers on July 27, 1209, the Abbot of Citeaux reputedly said “kill them all, God will know his own.” 20,000 people were massacred.

Europeans generally have long memories and the area of southwestern France between the Pyrenees and the Massif Central is still known today as the Pays Cathar – Cathar Country. Cynics may say that this is primarily used these days as a marketing tool to attract tourists to the region, but there is more to it than that. There is a real sense of independence here, an attachment to the past that is often the product of an intense shared trauma, and over everything else, a pride in remembering their long, and sometimes painful, history.

We are already making plans for another trip to the region next summer. Did I mention that the local food and wine are simply superb?

Happy Holidays,

Michael

A New Puzzle: I went to the hardware store the other day and, pointing to a shelf, said to the clerk “how much are those?” “\$4.50 each,” came the reply. “So how much for ten?” “\$9.00.” “What if I bought a hundred?” “That would be \$13.50.”

What was I buying? The first solution, drawn at random from all the correct entries submitted, will receive a \$200 discount off any trip listed in red in the next newsletter.

And a Solution: We asked you to translate the following into American English: “I hopped on the tube to see my mate in the nick. He was banged up for pinching some dosh from the till at work. He

News & Notes

Travel Insurance Why do you need travel insurance? Two reasons. In order to get the best rates, suppliers are making more and more services pre-paid and non-refundable. This has been the case with airline tickets for quite a long time, but with increasing frequency hotels are now jumping on this bandwagon. So you need coverage that will reimburse for all those non-refundable costs (passed along to you in the form of cancellation penalties by your tour operator), should you have to cancel your trip before you have even left home.



Merry Christmas!

any financial hardship that may come your way as a result of unforeseen circumstances that occur during the trip itself – anything from volcanic eruptions causing flights to be cancelled to having to live without your luggage for a few days. This category also includes the most serious situation – personal injury. What if you slipped and fell while on some Mediterranean island? Remember Medicare doesn’t cover you while you are overseas. This actually happened to one of our travellers a couple of years ago and the insurance covered everything from the operation in a private clinic to rehab, an extended hotel stay to recover, and a business class flight home. Without insurance this poor lady would have been looking at a bill in excess of \$50,000.

A European trip is a serious investment and having the right coverage gives you

said “it’s ‘orrible - no chips, no football on the telly and I haven’t ad a fag in a fortnight.” I told him “don’t panic and keep your pecker up.”

Translation: I took the subway to visit my friend in prison. He was incarcerated for stealing some money from the cash register at work. He said “it’s terrible - no french fries, no soccer on the television and I haven’t had a cigarette in 2 weeks.” I told him “don’t panic and keep your chin up.”

The first correct answer to be drawn at random was from Fred Leventhal of Cambridge, MA and so he gets to deduct \$200 from the cost of any tour listed in red in this newsletter.

peace of mind. We strongly recommend it. Unfortunately, due to new regulations introduced by the United States Travel Insurance Association (USTIA), **Discover Europe is no longer able to include insurance as a part of our tour packages.** Apparently including the insurance in the trip cost is equivalent to forcing people to buy it – and you can’t make people buy insurance.

If you registered for a trip for next year prior to October 1st, or if we have organised a private tour for you or your organization that includes travel insurance, we will, of course, honour this commitment and provide coverage for you.



This way to Normandy

Future registrants will automatically receive information on available coverage included with their registration confirmation package. Remember that many insurance companies require you to sign up within a certain time of registering (usually 2 to 3 weeks) in order to waive the dreaded “pre-existing condition” clause.

We will be more than happy to assist you with any questions you may have regarding coverage options. We are licensed to sell travel insurance by the state of New Hampshire and are partners with Allianz Global Assistance. Just call us at: 866-563-7077 and ask for Sarah, she will inform you of all your choices and send you a brochure. Happy – safe – travels!

L’Esprit Calva! Wine isn’t the only wonderful alcoholic drink to sip in France. Why not go to Normandy, and travel the Route du Cidre, where the



Can you say Eyjafjallajokull?

apple is king, not the grape? Due to unsuitable growing conditions for vineyards but perfect for apples, the area is having a renaissance of young Calvados producers, known as the Esprit Calvados, who are experimenting with old and new ways of making this delicious apple brandy.

There were about 15,000 Calvados producers in Normandy fifty years ago, today there are only 300, but this new-wave collective made up of progeny of generations of distillers is on to something. A.J. Liebling in his memoir *Between Meals* calls Calvados “the blessed liquid, the best alcohol in the world,” and has “a warmer

touch to the heart, and more outgoing personality” than any other spirit. So next time you are in Normandy, perhaps on a Discover Europe trip, try a warm glass of Calvados Christian Drouin or Calvados Roger Groult while visiting the ring of family distilleries, or sit in café and order one with your tart tatin or mousse au chocolat. You will feel the warmth and love of generations with every sip.

And Finally: We cannot close this edition of the newsletter without sending out our warmest holiday wishes to all of you. We are very aware, here at Discover Europe, that without you we would not be able to do what we do. So Charlotte, Sarah and I would like say a huge “Thank You” to everyone of you that has made our little company a success and a fun place to work.

OUR FAVORITE HOTELS

The Hotel du Chateau Carcassonne, France

We’ve said it before - location, location, location. The picture below is taken from the terrace of the hotel - staring right up at the medieval city walls of Carcassonne! This fabulous 4-star hotel is a perfect tranquil haven removed from the tourist crowds of the old city, but only a stone’s throw away.



The Hotel du Chateau

Itineraries 2015

Please note the two different types of tour shown here. **Red** tours are regular Discover Europe tours with between 5 and 15 participants open to the general public.

Blue tours are sponsored by an organization. These tours may well also be available, but as the circumstances vary from trip to trip, please call us first.

The Northern Lights, Jan 29 – Feb 01
We still have room on this Iceland trip but all our other departure dates are sold out!

Sicily: Island Crossroads, Mar 20 – 28
This ancient island has been home to the many civilizations of the Mediterranean. Now with an optional extension to Malta.

London On Stage, April 7 – 15
London theatre and so much more.

Barcelona & Mallorca, April 9 – 17
The vibrant city of Barcelona and an island paradise - and then stay on for:

Spanish Panorama, April 16 – 25
From Madrid to Andalucia with visits to Toledo, Cordoba, Granada and Seville.

A Greek Easter, April 10 – 19
Greek Orthodox Easter in the village of Tolo and then visit Delphi and Athens.

The Dalmatian Coast, Apr 23 – May 3
From Dubrovnik, up the coast of Croatia to Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia.

Wales & Welsh Borders, Apr 30 – May 9
A circular tour of Wales - from Snowdonia in the north to Cardiff and St Davids.

Under the Tuscan Sun, May 1 – 8
From our base in Montecatini Terme, we take trips into the Tuscan countryside.



Barnsley House

Barcelona to Valencia, May 5 – 14
A new trip for BCS to Barcelona and and down the Costa Blanca. Mallorca option.

Stately Homes, Part II, May 6 – 15
Part II of our tribute to *Downton Abbey* in partnership with The English Manner.

The Best of English Gardens, May 12 – 21
Our annual homage to the Chelsea Flower Show and gardens of southern England.

The Chelsea Flower Show, May 14 – 21
Staying outside London, this is a garden tour for our friends from Barrington, RI.



Lunch in Mallorca Anyone?

Turin & the Piedmont, May 14 – 23
Northwest Italy - the Shroud of Turin, the Langhe, and the Last Supper in Milan.

Paris, Normandy & the Loire, May 21 – 30
A circuit in northwest France: Giverny, Mt. St. Michel, Chateaux and Paris too.

Helen to Alexander, May 25 – Jun 9
An in-depth exploration of ancient Greece with Vassar professor Barbara Olsen.

Jewels of Eastern Europe, May 28 – Jun 6
Exploring this historic region from stays in Budapest, Vienna & Prague.

Royal Scotland, June 3 – 12
A new collaboration with The English Manner north of the border.

Along the Pyrenees, June 5 – 14
Exploring Cathar country and the Basque region from Carcassonne to Bilbao.

The Pilgrim’s Way, June 11 – 20
Following on from the Pyrenees tour, we trace the Way of St. James to Santiago.

A Cotswold Spring, June 11 – 20
An extended stay in lovely Stow-on-the-Wold. Quintessential English countryside.

The Channel Islands, June 11 – 20
A short stay in London and then on to Jersey & Guernsey. Potato Peel Pie anyone?

Gardens of the North, June 18 – 27
Exploring the lesser known gardens of northern England with Marian St Clair.

Island of Saints & Scholars, Jun 25 – Jul 4
Dublin to the west coast in the footsteps of the Irish literary giants.

Britain in Bloom, Jun 29 – Jul 7
The Hampton Court Flower Show and breathtaking private garden visits.

Discovering East Anglia, July 10 – 18
Experience life in a country house hotel with Gavin Miller in his home region.

Skye & the Highlands, Jul 23 – Aug 2
Edinburgh to Inverness, across to Skye and back down the west coast to Stirling.

Nourishing the Soul, August 3 – 12
Combining food and opera in Italy’s Marche region. Brilliant!

Inspirational Wales, August 7 – 16
Writers and poets who have been inspired by Wales with professor Denise Walen.