

# *A Custom Designed Itinerary to*

## *Southwest France*

*By*

### *IN QUEST OF THE CLASSICS*

Ref#: 100001

**DAY 1: TOULOUSE/LA BAILELSE.** Upon arrival at the Toulouse airport, you are met by an English-speaking driver and vehicle and transferred to **La Baïlesse**, a charming upscale B&B with 5 rooms. La Baïlesse is situated in the heart of the Tarn, a region of South-West France, famous for its hospitality and friendship, good food and lovely weather. Life here is slow and gentle, an idyllic retreat from daily bustle, yet, just one hour from Toulouse. An area drenched in history, situated within a richly-diverse landscape of mountains, rivers, lakes and woodlands, you can explore ancient hilltop villages, once brave Cathar strongholds, and absorb the cultural offerings of the medieval cities of Albi and Castres. Gloriously stocked daily markets and the local Gaillac vineyards will ensure your sensory delight. La Baïlesse is an impressive 18th century house, set in 12 acres of park and oak woods, guarded by watchful owls. It nestles amongst romantically undulating hills punctuated by fields of sunflowers. The heated, salt water swimming pool, landscaped by olives and ancient French oaks, is a tranquil place to unwind. The Scottish owners, John and Joan Raffin, fell in love with the area and put down roots four years ago. Balance of the day to relax before you gather for aperitif and dinner with wine.



**DAY 2: COOKING AND VISITS.** This morning meet in La Baïlesse's kitchen for your first cooking class. Lunch will consist of tasting the results of your cooking class. This afternoon you will be taken on an excursion to visit farms and local producers of cheese and "charcuterie". Return to La Baïlesse for aperitif and dinner with wine.

**DAY 3: MARKET AND VISITS.** After breakfast, visit a local market with your teacher, where you will get a course on selecting wild mushrooms. Return to La Baïlesse to learn how to cook them and enjoy the results for lunch. This afternoon visit Chateau Mauriac, which has been restored by a local artist and serves as an art gallery. Finish the afternoon with a private visit and wine tasting of Chateau Mayragues, by its owner. Return to La Baïlesse for aperitif and dinner with wine.



**DAY 4: COOKING AND VISITS.** Today you will learn how to prepare an authentic cassoulet and its different cooking stages. Tasting lunch of a local specialty. This afternoon, travel to the medieval town of Lautrec, where you'll have a walking tour. Return to La Baïlesse for aperitif and dinner with wine.

**DAY 5: DAY WITH THE CHEF.** After breakfast, meet with the chef at Les Saveurs, a celebrated local restaurant. He will do a demonstration of local dishes for you and will join you for lunch at the restaurant. This afternoon, you will be taken to a private chateau for a visit of its lovely garden and aperitif with the owner. Return to La Baïlesse for dinner.

**DAY 6: ALBI.** Travel to Albi, where you'll enjoy a full day in this beautiful city. This morning you will visit the newly restored historic covered market and, weather allowing, purchase goods at the market for a picnic by the River Tarn. This afternoon, visit the majestic cathedral with its medieval wall paintings and gothic choir, and the Toulouse Lautrec Museum (Albi is the birthplace of this famous artist). Return to La Baïlesse for a final evening celebration during which you'll taste what a real cassoulet is all about!



**DAY 7: DEPART.** Transfer back to Toulouse airport in time for your flight home. NOTE: We can arrange for extensions in Dordogne, Paris or other parts of France on an FIT basis for those who wish.