

Travel with Sandi: *Hidden Treasure & Heresy*



THE CHÂTEAU DE CAMON

SEPTEMBER 8TH - 18TH, 2024

Tales of Treachery and Intrigue in the Languedoc

One of the strongest motivations to travel is the deep yearning we have to connect with the past. We understand ourselves and the world around us a bit better by exploring the past, whether it be the thrill of entering an ancient building or the silence of standing in a timeless landscape. If this is the experience you are seeking, there could be no better place to spend a week than in the mysterious and spellbinding Ariège.

Our first base for exploration is the village of Camon, set in the foothills of the Pyrenees, in a region commonly known as Cathar Country. It is a region with a fierce sense of independence and a long memory. It has been 800 years since the Albigensian Crusade was launched against the heretic Cathars, but it has never been forgotten. With the *Château de Camon* as our base for seven nights, we will be immersed in the history of the region and, each day, we will set off to explore the antiquities of the Aude and Ariège. From the ruins of Cathar castles to the medieval grandeur of Carcassonne, it will be impossible to head home without feeling touched by the shadows of the past!

We'll end our tour with a couple of nights in the regional capital of Toulouse, France's 4th-largest city. We'll take a walking tour of the city center and a day trip to nearby Albi—from which the Albigensian Heresy took its name. We'll visit the Toulouse-Lautrec museum, housed in the Bishop's Palace (Toulouse-Lautrec was a native of Albi) and visit the imposing cathedral of Saint-Cecile before returning to Toulouse for our farewell dinner.

Join Discover Europe's president, Michael Induni, and Travel with Sandi's own Sandi Tinyk, as they show you the wonders of this magical region of southern France—that is now Michael's adopted home!

THE COST OF THIS ITINERARY, PER PERSON, DOUBLE OCCUPANCY IS:

LAND ONLY (NO AIRFARE INCLUDED):	\$ 4378
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:	\$ 1089

Airfares are available from most U.S. departure cities. Please call for details.

THE FOLLOWING SERVICES ARE INCLUDED:

HOTELS:	9 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels, including all hotel taxes and service charges
COACHING:	All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary, inc. round trip transfers from Barrington, RI, to Boston Logan
MEALS:	Breakfast daily, 2 lunches and 7 dinners
GUIDES:	Discover Europe guide, along with host, Sandi Tinyk throughout and local guides where indicated
BAGGAGE:	Porterage of one large suitcase per person
ENTRANCES:	Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary

Please note that travel insurance is not included on this tour. Insurance information will be mailed to each registration on receipt of deposit.

PLEASE NOTE:

- The Château de Camon offers a limited number of twin-bedded rooms, assigned on a first-come/first-served basis.
- Please be aware that the Château does not have an elevator, and all rooms are located above ground level. Participants should be capable of climbing at least one flight of stairs. If you prefer a room on the lowest level, kindly inform us in advance.

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH - Join your coach transfer from Barrington, RI., to Boston Logan Airport. **OVERNIGHT: PLANE**

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH - Your arrival in Toulouse will be met by Discover Europe's representative for the short (one and a half hour) drive to the Château. The rest of the day is free to unpack, relax and begin exploring the neighborhood. This evening the group will gather on the terrace for drinks before a welcome dinner party at the Château. **(D) OVERNIGHT: CAMON**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH - A leisurely start this morning, to shake off the effects of the long flights. After breakfast on the terrace, overlooking the lovely gardens set against the distant Pyrenean peaks, we'll take a stroll around the village and visit the abbey church. A short drive will then bring us to Mirepoix. There will be time to explore one of France's most exquisite medieval squares, and enjoy lunch at one of the many cafes. This afternoon we head to the nearby village of Vals to visit the Église Rupèstre or Trogladyte Church. We dine at the Château again this evening. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: CAMON**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH - This morning we'll cut across the heavenly Ariège countryside to the magical Romanesque Abbey of St. Hilaire. Then on to Limoux, famed for its Blanquette—a sparkling wine. There will be time to find lunch and perhaps a little free time for shopping in La Place de la République, the beautiful heart of the old town. This afternoon we'll head to the mountain-top village of Rennes-le-Château. A visit to the parish church will

either spark or rejuvenate your interest in Dan Brown's mysteries. The church is full of symbols and secret codes which may indicate that Abbé Saunière, the priest from 1885 to 1910, had discovered the lost treasure of Solomon, brought to the region by the Visigoths in the 5th century. On returning to the hotel there will be time to relax and enjoy a cocktail on the terrace, before we go to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

(B, D) OVERNIGHT: CAMON

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH - Weather permitting, we'll head up into the high Pyrenees today. Our first stop will be the beautiful village of Montailou, overlooked by the ruins of the medieval castle. This was the village written about by Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie in his fascinating book *Montailou*, which gives a vivid picture of life in a mountain village during the time of the Cathar repression. Lunch is included at a restaurant with unparalleled mountain views. This afternoon we wend our way down the mountains, stopping in the spa town of Ax-les-Thermes, back to Camon. On our return to Camon, we'll have a buffet dinner at the house of Discover Europe's president, Michael Induni.

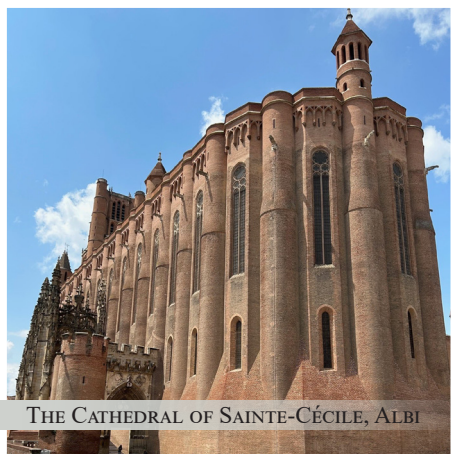
(B, L, D) OVERNIGHT: CAMON

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH - Our first stop this morning will be the biodynamic vineyard of Chateau Maris. We have a tour of the cellars and taste the delightful product before we drive to Carcassonne. If you had to choose one medieval fortress town to visit, Carcassonne would be it. Restored to perfection, you only need imagine fellow travelers dressed in sackcloth, doublet and hose, and you're back in the medieval world! We will have free time to find lunch at one of the many cafés and restaurants and visit the beautiful St. Nazaire church with some of the loveliest stained glass in France. There will be free time to tour the inner fortress, Château Comtal, and wander the narrow alleyways, before we return to Camon. Tonight we will either venture into Mirepoix for dinner at a local restaurant or have a light picnic in the village. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: CAMON**



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH - Heading south this morning, our first stop is the town of Puivert, dominated by its castle. Relatively intact for a Cathar castle, Puivert is in a wonderful position overlooking the surrounding countryside. We'll visit the Museum of Quercorb (the local name for the surrounding area) in the village. After lunch here, we drive to Montségur. The ruined castle, set high on a rocky crag, was the final refuge of the persecuted Cathars. In 1244 the Catholic Church carried out one of its worst ever atrocities; 225 Cathars, who refused to recant, were burnt on a communal pyre. There will be time to make the ascent to the castle (30 minutes), for those who enjoy a hike, and for those with nothing to prove, a wonderful respite to take in the views and reflect on the horrors of the past! Before heading home, there will be a stop at the village museum. The evening is free. **(B, L) OVERNIGHT: CAMON**

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH - Our first stop this morning will be the town of Foix, dominated by its imposing Château. We'll have free time for lunch here before continuing to our next destination. The more adventurous can opt for a half-mile walk along an uneven subterranean riverbed which will take you back to the Magdalenian period (circa 11,000 BC) and to the vast chamber of the Grotte de Niaux. Leaping from the walls of the cave are the most beautiful images of horses, ibex, stags and bison, some still as fresh as the day they were painted. These are among the best prehistoric paintings you will see anywhere in Europe. Those who do not fancy the adventure will be dropped at the local prehistory museum in Tarascon, where you can see replicas of the cave art. Tonight, a final dinner at the Château, always beautifully presented by master chef, Tom Sleight. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: CAMON**



THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINTE-CÉCILE, ALBI

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH - Leaving Camon this morning, we make our way to Toulouse, stopping in Mirepoix, en route, to attend the weekly market. Upon arrival, we will have free time for lunch and then enjoy a walking tour of the city, including St. Sernin, one of the most influential Romanesque abbeys in Europe. We end the tour at our hotel where the remainder of the afternoon and evening are free for personal exploration. **(B) OVERNIGHT: TOULOUSE**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH - Heading north from Toulouse, our excursion today will be to Albi, a classic red brick-and-tile Languedoc town. A walking tour will introduce us to the town, and will include visits to St. Cecilia and the Bishop's Palace, home of the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec. This is the most extensive collection of works by the local aristocratic artist, from early works to his later years in Paris. We'll have time for lunch before our mid-afternoon return to Toulouse. The remainder of the afternoon is your own for shopping or sightseeing. This evening we will gather for a farewell dinner. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: TOULOUSE**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH - Morning transfers to Toulouse Airport for return flights to the USA. **(B)**

*Key to included meals: **B** - breakfast, **L** - lunch, **D** - dinner