



Mati & Jimmy's Travel tips and itinerary for France & Dordogne



Where are you going?

The wedding is in the town of Castelnau La Chapelle, in the department of Dordogne, in the region Nouvelle Aquitaine.



Phone and data usage

The country code in France is +33. Before you leave, check with your phone provider if they offer international roaming (phone must be unlocked).

If you do not want to use roaming or incur charges while traveling, make sure to keep your phone in airplane mode (or remove the sim card if you have one).

If you want to access very cheap roaming while you are in France (not through your carrier), we recommend using the eSim service Yesim. (Link to sign up: <https://yesim.onelink.me/F4hw/qwehp9r5>)



Money

We do not recommend getting euros in cash before you leave. Instead, when you land, find an ATM. Avoid currency exchange desks (especially in airports), as they charge hefty fees.



Language

Remember that you are visiting very rural France. While some people will know varying degrees of English, communication can be difficult. We recommend that you download google translate and download the French translations offline (tutorial: [link](#)), so you can use it even if you do not have data/cell service.



Emergency number

The local emergency service number is 112 (works in all European countries and therefore is available in English). It operates like 911 in North America.



Travel documents

Your passport needs to be valid for at least 6 months from your entry in the EU. Make sure to have photocopies of your passport and driver's license in your suitcase, just in case. Write your emergency contact numbers on them too.



Tipping culture

Service is included in the prices you see at restaurants, cafes, etc. Tips are always appreciated, but never expected. Tipping tends to be reserved for exceptional service. If you choose to tip, it is generally done in cash after you pay your bill (no tipping options on most credit card machines in France).

If you participate in guided tours, tips are also highly appreciated, but not really mandatory (especially if you pre-paid for the tour or if it's included in a ticket).



Driving and GPS

Rental cars: Car rental companies can be a bit different in France than what you are used to. Cars tend to be smaller and by default will manual cars. Make sure to be clear about how many seats you need and how large you need the car to be. Also be sure to specify if you want an automatic or a manual.

Navigation: Google Maps is the best map to use in the area. Apple Maps does not work well. Make sure to save the map offline (useful if you are out of data or in an area without cell service). Tutorial: [link](#)

Roads and laws: Roads in Dordogne are small and windy. Be cautious, and respect speed limits at all times. A few rules to be aware of: French police take speed limits very seriously. The driver also cannot use their phone while driving. Lastly, make sure to never turn right at a red light. That is completely illegal in all of Europe.

Tolls: Most French highways are toll roads. It is easier to have a card that you can tap on toll roads. On all highways, there are nice rest stops areas with free bathrooms, loads of snacks, and even showers in some.



Train travel

Booking trains in France should only be done through the SNCF Connect ([link](#)) website. The website is not awesome, but do not use third party apps or vendors. If you run into any issues, the only way to get support or to be rebooked is to go through SNCF.



Safety

France is generally safe, but general caution is always recommended. This applies especially to Paris and other big busy cities. Make sure to bring bags that zip up and to keep an eye out for pick pocketers.



Power and outlets

American appliances run on 110 volts, while European appliances are 220 volts. If you see a range of voltages printed on the item or its plug (such as "110-220"), you're OK in France. If your appliance doesn't have that, it will not work in France. You will need to either bring a power converter on top of your adapter, or ask your accommodation if they provide what you need (such as hairdryers, etc).



Medication

If you need any sort of prescription medication, make sure to bring enough for your trip and more in case you run into travel issues, like a cancelled flight. Also, a lot more things are prescription only in France (like topical antibiotic cream), so make sure to bring whatever you think you may need.



Flying to France

It's typically cheaper to book round trip flights from bigger hubs (like from Chicago or New York) directly to Paris. It's also usually cheaper to book to your flights to the hubs separately.

Flying within Europe can be very cheap using budget airlines like Ryanair or EasyJet, though make sure to double check the luggage allowance (carryons are not included). Keep in mind these are an economical, no frills option.

What to do in Paris

Paris

All the expected stops, Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum, Champs Elysée, Notre Dame Cathedral, Arc de Triomphe, Invalides, Galerie Lafayette, The hop on hop off buses are a great way to learn about the history of the city and to make sure you see all the main stops without having to navigate the subway or bus system.

For the Eiffel Tower and Louvre, definitely book your tickets as soon as you can, as they tend to sell out each day. Another fantastic way to look at the city is to go up Tour Montparnasse ([ticket link](#)) – you get to see the whole city from above!

Make sure to go up to Montmartre and explore the neighborhood. If you can make it for sunset – even better!

There are endless things to see and do in Paris. Food, fashion, museums, architecture, art... You will find absolutely everything you can think of! I recommend looking at Lonely Planet for excellent advice for anything you have in mind: [link here](#)

Mati's favorite museum: Musée Quai Branly. It's a museum designed by French architect Jean Nouvel to feature the indigenous art and cultures of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas ([link](#))



Arc de Triomphe



Notre Dame



Montmartre



Sacré Coeur

Quick note

Make sure to click on all the photos on this page! Paris, like a lot of France, is best explored on foot or by bike. Walking around the busy streets, wandering in new neighborhoods, asking locals where they like to eat or have a drink is the best way to experience the city. Learning a few basic words of French will also take you a long way! Have fun!

What to do in Bordeaux

Bordeaux

Bordeaux is the closest city to Dordogne that is easily accessible by train and main roads.

Bordeaux is an old city with incredible architecture. The best way to explore is definitely on foot or by bike, but if mobility is an issue, the hop on hop off buses work really well and give you great facts about the history, architecture, and local culture. Definitely do not try to drive around the old town – most streets are pedestrianized, and parking is a nightmare. There are safe cycle lanes all around the city and you can rent city bikes from most neighborhoods.

Things to see while walking

Things to see while walking around:

- Boardwalk along the Garonne
- Miroir d'eau & Place de la Bourse
- Rue Sainte Catherine (longest pedestrian shopping street in Europe)
- Jardin public (bring a picnic!)
- Grosse Cloche and Rue Saint James (awesome little shops)
- Place Pey Berland (cathedral and tower – go up to the top of the tower for a great view of the city)
- Place du Grand Théâtre

Try a canelé in one of the shops around the city. The story of Canelé, the most traditional Bordeaux pastry: Legend has it that the first canelés were made by nuns at a convent in Bordeaux at the end of the 17th century. Canelé is made with flour and egg yolks that were given to nuns by winemakers, who used egg whites to purify the wine.

If you like wine, Bordeaux is home to the Cité du Vin (Wine city), which is the biggest wine museum in the world.

There are tons of cute restaurants, fun bars, cozy coffee shops, nice shops all over the city. Take your time and explore!



Day trips from Bordeaux



Seaside and beaches

Drive over to the Atlantic coast and enjoy the beaches. You could start by going to Dune du Pilat, which is the biggest sand dune in Europe. There are stairs to climb to the top (it's steep but very well worth it). After that, you should go to Arcachon. Arcachon is a really popular destination, it's a very lovely seaside town with lots of shops and restaurants. Make sure to try a moule frites (local mussels and fries). After lunch, I recommend going to Lacanau (another little town) and explore the nearby beaches. If you like surfing, you can rent a board and there as well. Make sure to catch the sunset before heading back to Bordeaux!

Links:

- [Dune du Pilat](#)
- [Arcachon](#)
- [Awesome sunsets](#)



Wine country

Drive or take a train to Saint Emilion!

If you are driving to Dordogne for the wedding from Bordeaux, stopping in St Emilion for a wine tasting and taking a quick stroll around the village is a great idea. Otherwise, the train takes about 30 mins from Bordeaux.

There are a lot of wonderful vineyards to visit in and around the village. Here are a couple of them (+ a guide to other vineyards [here](#)):

- [Chateau de Ferrand](#) – fabulous tour and great tasting
- [Château Guadet](#) – accessible on foot from the village
- [Château Soutard](#) – beautiful building
- [Chateau Ambre Tour Pourret](#) – also offers cooking classes

Questions? Contact us!

If you have a question, you can email us at mathildelafranque@gmail.com and jamesmsteier@gmail.com or text us at +353 89 608 6042 (Mati) and +353 83 015 0667 (Jimmy). We can't wait to celebrate with you!

What to do in Dordogne

Welcome to the best part of France!

There is an official guide to the area that was put together by the local tourism board that I found to be absolutely fantastic. The document is in French with English and Spanish translations. I strongly recommend browsing through it in advance! Link: [document](#)

Medieval castles

So many castles to choose from some medieval and some more “modern”! Here are some we suggest you check out: Beynac Castle ([link](#)), Castelnaud la Chapelle Castle ([link](#)), Les Milandes ([link](#)), Eyrignac Manor ([link](#)), Hautefort Castle ([link](#)).

Villages

We strongly recommend visiting all of these villages! They each have their own charming things to see: [La Roque Gageac](#) (wander around MUST SEE), [Domme](#) (MUST SEE), [Sarlat la Canéda](#) (see the market on Saturday morning), [Beynac](#), and [Castelnaud la Chapelle](#)!

Prehistory

Caves upon caves! So many fantastic opportunities to see cave paintings that are thousands of years old. The villages of Les Eyzies is really where most of them are ([link](#)). Lascaux cave is the most popular and is really a treat to visit ([link](#))!

Other activities

Les Jardins de Marqueyssac ([link](#)), les Cabanes du Breuil ([link](#)), Carsac water gardens ([link](#)), Gouffre de Proumeyssac ([link](#)), Les Jardins d'Eyrignac ([link](#)), Bamboo Gardens and bar ([link](#)), Boat trips in La Roque ([link](#)), day trip to Rocamadour ([link](#)), and so many more!

