



SACRED SOUTHERN FRANCE TOUR

Following path of the Cathars, Templars
and Mary Magdalene

September 3rd -17th

With

ANNIE MCKENZIE

0402801589

DAY 1

THURSDAY 3RD SEPT

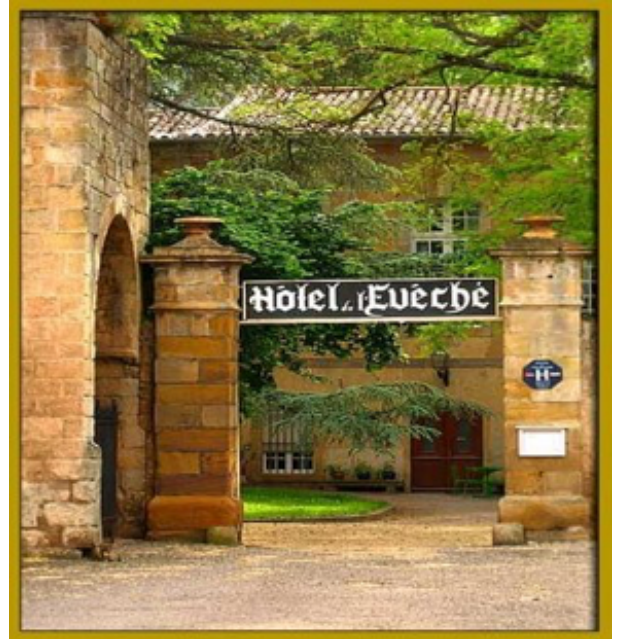
Toulouse Alet Les Baines

Toulouse We arrive at Toulouse airport and are picked up by bus and taken to Alet les Bains in the heart of Cathar country where we will be based for 7 days.

Settle into Hôtel Eveché – this hotel was once the site of an ancient Bishops Palace and lies in the shadow of the Abbey ruins.

2 Rue Nicolas Pavillon, 11580 Alet-les-Bains
04 68 69 90 25

In the afternoon we will explore the Abbaye d'Alet les Bains where there is a beautiful Black Madonna. This site was once home to a temple of the Goddess Cybele.



DAY 2

FRIDAY 4TH SEPT

Rennes Le Chateau

Today we visit the famous Rennes le Château and explore this town of mystery and legend. We spend much of our time in the Church and surrounds before having lunch.

Lunch : Le Jardin de Marie in Rennes le Château



Rennes Les Bains

After lunch we take a 20 minute drive to the magical village of Rennes les Bains

To visit the hot springs and have a guided exploration of this ancient Celtic town – and then onto the Seat of Isis – an ancient stone seat.(also known as the Devil’s chair)

Diner in Rennes les Bains ?



DAY 3 | SATURDAY 5TH SEPT

Alet Les Baines

No journey to Alet les Bains would be complete without a visit to Lorrie’s Angel Gallery -Open At : 10.00 AM

We follow this with a guided tour of the town including– Nostradamus’ house

Lunch in Alet « La Buvette » Rue Mandrière

Montsegur

After lunch we journey to the site of the Château de Montsegur – the last stronghold of the Cathars. After a brief ceremony at the foot of the mountain, we climb to the ruins of the castle.

This is where 6,000 troops held the Cathars to seige for 10 months in 1242. They were eventually given the ultimatum –to renounce their faith or die. Over 200 Cathars threw themselves on the raging pyre at the foot of Montsegur. A monument stands testament to this horrific event.

Visit the museum and may be the Church if possible in the township

Dîner in Montsegur village.



DAY 4 | SUNDAY 6TH SEPT

Esperaza

This morning we visit local markets where the locals sell handcrafts, crystals and delicious regional food. In the heart of the market is St Michaels Church which is on the St Michael Line and is aligned with Aldebaran.

Lunch at Lanet - a village close by.
Le moulin neuf D212 Lanet

Château De Villeroche - Termenes

Travel to Château de Villeroche –Termenes Medieval village linked to the decline of the Cathar Church. In 1210 this Château was seized by Simon de Montforte and given to one of his lieutenants.

It was here that the last Cathar Parfit (Guilhem Belibaste) was burned alive in 1321 on the orders of the archbishop.

Dinner at Villeroche Termene



DAY 5 | MONDAY 7TH OF SEPT

Ussat Les Baines

Christian, a modern day Cathar leads us to two sacred Cathar Caves and describes the ceremonies carried out there as well as giving us insight into the Cathar way of life. Afterwards we partake of a typical Cathar Meal at Christian's home.

Tarascon Sur Ariege

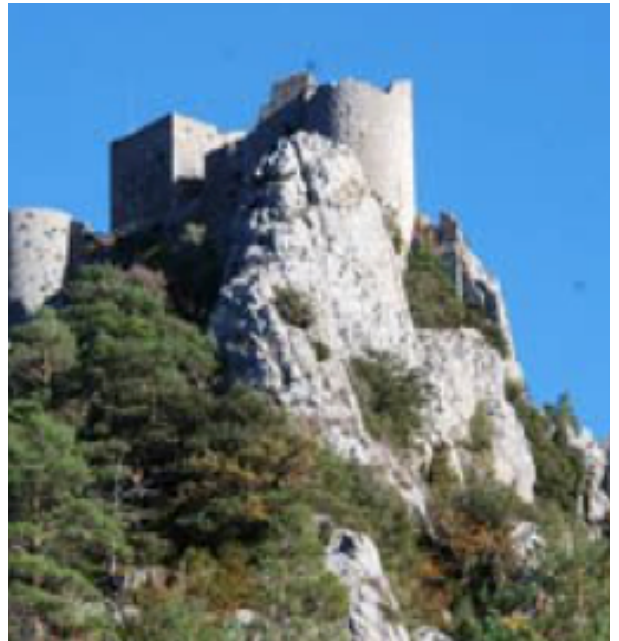
After lunch we visit the Church- Notre Dame de Sabarthes to see an ancient Black Madonna .Legend says that « Our Lady » mysteriously appeared before Charlegmagne in 778 AD. She supposedly saved him and his armies from defeat by the Saracens. When she disappeared his men dug into the earth and uncovered a bronze figure inscribed – « Our Lady of Victory » The Church was built on this site. This Church also venerates Mary Magdalen.

Dinner at the Hôtel

DAY 6 | TUESDAY 8TH OF SEPT

Chateau Puilaurens

Château Puilaurens (one of the most well placed Castles in France) This Château was once owned by the Abbey of St Michel De Cuxa before being aquired by the Queen of Aragon. It served as a refuge for many of the Cathars and Knights Templar. It withstood Attacks by Simon de Montforte and his successors. It finally surrendered in 1255It has a chapel dedicated to « Dame Blanch » who was a legendary figure known to protect the Cathar and.Templar causes.



Gorge De Galamus

We will visit the Hermitage de St Antoine de Galamus built into a cavern in the mountainside There is a grotto with a spring at the gorge and this is said to be under the protection of Mary Magdalene.

There is a mystery associated with this beautiful place. In 1597 Albert Foncay Map and Sister Marie Bernard – Brauge were said to have ventured into the cave. Sister Marie disappeared mysteriously and her companion died 3 weeks later.

Forests of Nebias

Here we immerse ourselves in the deep green wonderland of Sacred Earth energies and home of the Elementals. There is an ancient stone Labyrinth here.

Puivert

Lunch at Puivert

Visit the Cathare Castle de Puivert This castle was owned by the Congost Family who were practicing Cathars. In November 1210 it was subjected to a 3 day seige by Thomas Pons de Bruyere – a lieutenant of Simon de Montfort and became his property. It was destroyed through the collapse of a dam and was rebuilt at the start of the 14th Century.



Couiza

**Dinner in Couiza at le Carnotzet
63 Route des Pyrénées, 11190 Couiza**

If raining (of course it never rains) !!!!

Le Château d'Arques

11190 Arques

04 68 69 84 77

DAY 7

WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPT

Abbaye De St Michael De Cuxa

The Abbaye de St Michael de Cuxa was a Benedictine Abbey founded in 840 AD. It sits at the base of Mount Canigou (the ascension mountain) The Abbey is one of the most important in Southern France. It is known for its beautiful carved pillars. The Abbey houses a temple to the Sun and one to the Moon as well as an ancient Madonna.

Nearby is a healing stone aligned to the tellurgic energies of this site. This is thought to be a Sun Stone connected to the cult of Mithras. The monks here were said to be the last who knew how to work with the powerful Earth energies.

PRADES is a beautiful town near the Abbey. We will have a tour of the town and lunch at one of the cafes.



Lunch in Prades

DAY 8

THURSDAY 10TH OF SEPT

Alet Les Baines - Minerve

Départ Alet les Bains

Limoux

Visit Limoux- there are 2 significant churches here – The Church of Saint Martin which has a famous stained glass window depicting Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

-Notre Dame de Marceille with its Black Madonna. There is an old Roman road that runs along side this church that leads to the « well of visions »

There have been rumours that this church has a secret underground vault that contains some type of treasure - Monetary, sacred, pagan or Templar – ah the mystery.



Carcassonne

Lunch in Carcassonne

Carcassonne – This is a medieval walled city rich in history. This area was settled around 3,500 BC. Around 600 BC - The Celts, Druids and Phoenicians later developed the area into an important ceremonial and commercial center. Later the Visigoths arrived and were reputed to have brought vast treasure with them which is rumoured to be still buried in the area. There is a strong Cathar link to Carcassonne – much of the Cathar inquisition took place here. There is a beautiful Basilica here dedicated to St Nazaire. We explore the walled city, its ramparts and the Castle with time to wander at your leisure.



Minerve

**Travel to Minerve – Hôtel Relais Chantovent
(3 nights)
17, grande rue Chantovent
Tel : 04 68 91 14 18**

Dinner in Minerve



Minerve

Explore Minerve
Lunch in Minerve

Minerve was the site of a 10 week Siege by Simon de Montfort in 1210. The village had been a refuge for Cathars after the massacre of Beziers and was protected by a double wall and overhanging natural ledges. The troupes set up catapults to attack the towns water supply and the walls were breached near the well. The town was forced to surrender on July 22nd 1210. As a result 180 Cathars were burnt to death.

This is an ancient site and was once dedicated to the Goddess Minerva.

After lunch we will explore the surrounding area.

Menhir at Malves de Minervois

and any other megaliths or Dolmans in the area

Crottes De Limousis

These caves house a huge aragonite chandelier.

visit at 3.30PM / 4.30PM

Dinner at La cave 9, place de l'Ormeau
34210 La Caunette, 04 68 91 31 98



Mazamet

Mazamet – Cathar Museum

Caunes Minervois

Lunch in Caunes Minervois

Chateau De Lastours

Visit of Château de Lastours

Beziers

Beziers Cathedral (Cathedrale St Nazaire) sits on the site of the massacre of Beziers. On the 22nd July 1209 Beziers was under siege from the Crusading army under the command of Abbot Arnaud Amaury. They refused to hand over the Cathar « Heretics » so the Crusaders climbed the walls and when they could not determine who were the Cathars, Abbot Amaury made his famous command « Kill them all, God will know his own » Catholics and Cathars were slain in a bloody 3 hr battle ending in the whole city being burned. It is estimated that 20,000 died that day.

The city was rebuilt with the Cathedral high on a rocky outcrop.

Diner in Minerve



DAY 11

SUNDAY 13TH OF SEPT - SOLAR ECLIPSE

Minerve - Sainte Maximin La Sainte Baume

Depart Minerve

Lunch at Aigues des Mortes

Sainte Maximin La Sainte Baume

Travel to Hotel

Le Couvent Royal ->
Place Jean Salusse, 83470 Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume
Tel :04 94 86 55 66 (2 nights)

*Dinner at Hotel



DAY 12

MONDAY 14TH OF SEPT

Cathedral Saint Maximin La Sainte Baume

After lunch we tour the Cathedral where on 12th December 1279 , a sarcophagus Was found in the crypt of St Maximin. It was proclaimed to be the tomb of Mary Magdalene and the source of many miracles. In 1295 a huge Basilica was built on the site under the order of the Dominicans. Mary Magdalen's Skull is still housed here.



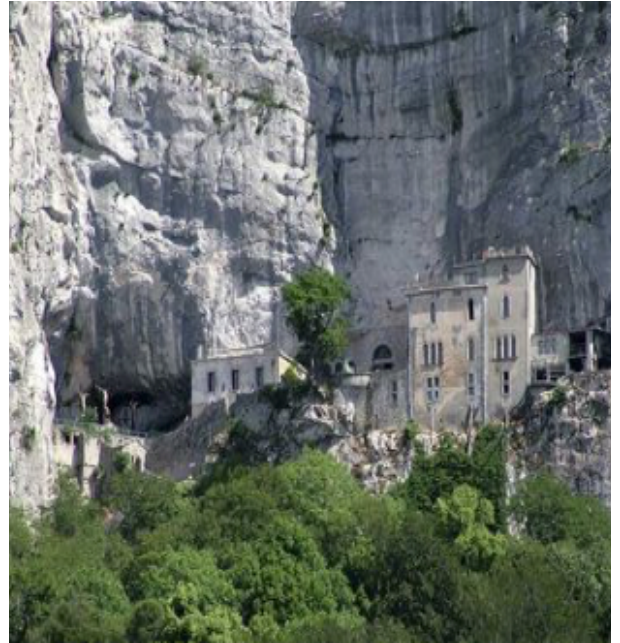
Magdalen Grotto

Drive to Grotte de la Ste Baume – a cathedral carved into the top of the mountain. We make the pilgrimage up the hill which should take about 30 mins.

Mary Magdalene is said to have lived here in the last years of her life writing her memoirs here.

The mountain here was sacred to Isis and considered a sacred place for thousands of years.

At the base of the mountain is a wonderful church with beautiful frescoes of Mary Magdalene.



Lunch in Saint Maximin la Sainte Baume

DAY 13

TUESDAY 15TH OF SEPT

Saint Maximin La Saint Baume – Les Saintes Maries De La Mere

Depart Sainte Maximin la St Baume

Tarascon

Travel to Tarascon to visit Saint Martha's Cathedral.

St Martha was Mary Magdalene's Sister and her remains are in the crypt where she was buried over 2,000 years ago.

Saintes Maries De La Mere

On to Les Saintes Maries de la Mer
Hotel Mas Salicornes
Avenue d'Arles, 13460 Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer
Tel : 04 90 97 83 41



DAY 14

WEDNESDAY 16TH SEPT

Saintes Maries De La Mere

Explore the village and the beach and Church
Saintes Maries De La Mere is the town on the Mediterranean where Mary Magdalene arrived in France by boat. She was accompanied by family, friends and servants. The town was named after the 3 Marys - Mary Magdalene and St Mary Salome and St Mary Jacobe whose bones along with those of Saint Sarah their Egyptian servant were found in the 15th Century. They are now in the crypt of the church along with many other treasures including a 1st century stone altar and a magnificent Black Madonna said to represent Saint Sarah – the Saint revered by the Gypsies who come to celebrate her here every year on May 24th.



This beautiful town is said to be the capital of the Camague – an area renown for its beaches, flamingoes and wild horses.
Free time in town

Dinner in town – last night

DAY 15

THURSDAY 17TH SEPT

Saintes Maries De La Mere – Marseilles Airport – Home

Depart for Marseilles Airport and home

Cost



\$5,000 AUD twin share

\$1,000 single room supplement.

The price may vary with currency fluctuations.

This includes, breakfast each day, entrance fees ,accommodation and bus travel.

You are responsble for your airfares , meals, tips and spending money . You are also responsible for getting to Toulouse and home from Marseille.

Travel insurance is mandatory.

To secure a place requires \$1000 deposit.

Contact Annie -

+61 402 801 589 or

griffonquest@hotmail.com