

DISCOVER THE ART OF FRENCH CHEESEMAKING TOUR ITINERARY

14 May 2024 to 21 May 2024

You are invited to immerse yourself in the culture of the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region in France on this 8-day gourmet cheesemaking tour. This is a very special opportunity to discover the mysteries of some of the world's greatest cheeses and cheesemaking traditions.

The itinerary for this trip is unique. These visits have been negotiated over several years and are not available to the public. You will have exclusive entry and guidance offered by small artisan cheese makers who are passionate about the cheese they make but also enjoy our curiosity about their cheese. There will be some early starts to ensure we get to the fromageries in time to see the milking and the cheesemaking process.

Additional afternoon cheesemaking visits have also been added to the 2024.

Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region in the east of France, taking in the Burgundy wine country to the west and the Jura mountains and Swiss border to the east.



You will see close-up, artisan cheesemakers applying their techniques to various styles of cheeses. This will include Faisselle, yoghurt, fresh and aged lactic acid cheese, Camembert, Raclette, Morbier, blue vein cheese, pressed Tommes and several additional hard pressed cheeses. You will also see the milking of cows, sheep and goats. You

will see cheeses being made from cows, sheep and goat's milk. We will also see how these artisan fromageries carry out their cheeses' affinage (ripening).



Is this tour for you?

- If you are interested in the art of cheesemaking or just love cheese, this trip will present opportunities for you to visit artisan cheesemakers as they make and mature their cheeses.
- Through Graham Redhead, from Cheesemaking, you will have exclusive access to cheesemaking farms and fromageries that are not normally accessible to the public.
- This trip will start in Dijon, then take you away from the larger city centre and out into the French countryside.
- On this tour will be accompanied by Emilie, our French interpreter (and a cheesemaker), who will assist with all aspects of the trip including, conversations with the cheesemakers and all other queries you may have. We will also be joined by Marine as our tour guide and driver.
- We will visit a wide range of places along the route, including small French towns, farmers' markets, waterfalls, medieval towns, castles, and other local sights.
- There will be picnic lunches (weather permitting) where we will enjoy the produce of the region including breads, cheeses, mustards, charcuterie, pâtés, fruits and French wine.

- Accommodation on this trip will be a mixture of hotel accommodation in Dijon and Les Rousses and Chambre d'hôtes accommodation in Château-Chalon. Twin share, double and single room supplement options will be available on this tour. An additional charge of \$750 applies for the single supplement.

Start and finish: Dijon

Day 1 (Tuesday 14 May) begins at 9.00 am therefore, it is recommended that you arrive at least a day prior to the commencement of the tour.

Arrival back in Dijon on Day 8 (Tuesday 21 May) will be before 10.00 am.

Group size: strictly maximum 10 persons (excluding three staff)

DAY 1

Welcome to Dijon!

Today following breakfast at our hotel we will participate in a guided walking tour, taking in this medieval city's architectural history and tales. We will learn about specialty foods and wines of the region. We then visit Les Halles Market, Dijon's lively and famous food and produce market to see the vast range of fresh produce available.

This evening, we will have pre-dinner drinks to discuss the tour agenda and then set out to prepare our three-course meal as we sip wine and become chefs for the night at a French cooking school, before returning to Dijon in preparation for an early start the next day.

DAY 2

Today we will visit an artisan fromagerie where a range of raw milk goat and cow cheeses are produced.

We will watch the cheesemaker's goats being milked and may even have opportunities to assist by scooping and hooping the curds into the cheese moulds. Several styles of lactic acid and rennet set cheese, including fresh and aged cheeses, as well as yoghurt (plus a cow's milk Tomme made for a local farmer) are made in this fromagerie. We will see the small cellars that are used to age these cheeses and the simple methods used to control temperature and humidity for cheese ripening. Once the cheese is

completed, we will enjoy tasting a range of cheeses made by this cheesemaker and a glass of wine.

Weather permitting, we will picnic beside the grape vines at Église Saint-Antoine de Fixen, the 10th-century church in Fixen. After lunch, we visit a washed rind factory (window viewing of the cheesemaking and washing techniques) and then travel to the vineyards and wine cellars of Clos St Louis in the Côte de Nuits wine region to learn about the whole winemaking process: from vine work to the bottling process and cellaring and enjoy a tasting of these remarkable wines. The day concludes with a relaxing walk to have dinner in one of Dijon's best restaurants.

DAY 3

Today we depart Dijon. Our next stop will be to observe the hands-on manufacture of a 45kg single Comté cheese using a traditional copper vat utilising centuries-old techniques over a wood fire to heat, cook and then hoop the curd. We discuss every aspect of the manufacture from the raw milk to the growing of the starter cultures and natural rennet and the intricate details of the setting, cutting, cooking hooping and affinage techniques used. This is the only manufacturer in France to make Comté using these traditional techniques.

We then enjoy our second picnic lunch beside a beautiful waterfall. Following lunch, you can stroll along the watercourse to an ancient monastery or just sit back to enjoy the peaceful surroundings of the waterfall as you sip your wine.

Following lunch, we make our way to our accommodation, overlooking lush farmlands, in the Upper Jura Regional Nature Park, in the beautiful town of Les Rousses, only minutes from the Swiss border. We have a cheese themed dinner in a beautiful local restaurant.

DAY 4

Today we visit a small mountain fromagerie and have the very rare opportunity to witness the manufacture and have a discussion on the techniques used to manufacture blue vein cheese. We will see the cellars used to ripen these cheeses and taste the different blue vein cheeses.



We then visit a 'Fruitiere', a Cooperative French Cheese Dairy, a larger semi-automated fromagerie with window viewing of the cheese manufacture of Comté, Morbier and Raclette. We then have the opportunity to walk into the cheese ripening caves to see and hear first-hand from the cheesemaker the intricate details of temperature and humidity control and washing and turning required to ripen these cheeses. This Fruitiere has been the recipient of many awards for the manufacture of their cheeses. We will finish with a degustation of their cheeses.

Following lunch in our small village, will visit a former military fort where tunnels used to house soldiers have been converted into one of the most impressive cheese underground ripening and storage facilities you will ever see. Over 140,000 cheeses are ripened in this facility.

Dinner tonight will be at a renowned restaurant Le Chalet du Lac les Rousses.

DAY 5

Today we see sheep milk cheese being made. We speak at length with the owners and how they established this new fromagerie, share the farm duties, the sheep breeds they chose, the guard dogs used to protect the flock from minx, wild dogs and wolves, the husbandry techniques and pasture management. Then we venture inside the small fromagerie to see up close how they turn this lovely milk into a variety of fresh lactic acid cheeses and a lightly pressed rennet set Tomme and yoghurts. We discuss the cheesemaking details including milk composition, temperature, starter cultures, cut size and how to determine the final hooping stage. We watch as the hoops are hand-filled hoops, turned and lightly pressed. We also see how they manage the affinage process in that same room, to get the lovely 'wrinkled' rinds on their cheeses, the ashing process, and the washing, temperature and humidity control required for these cheeses. We taste each of

these cheeses, and their lovely homemade apple cider and the local wines.

We then visit a small French town where you can wander through the town and the street market. Next, we visit the last remaining foundry in France to view the manufacture of cowbells using 200-year-old production methods. The bells are handmade, and the company is recognised as a 'living heritage company'. Then we visit a farm to see a herd of Montbeliard and Simmental cows being milked.

For dinner this evening will cross over into Switzerland to a small village and eat at a lovely local restaurant.



DAY 6

Today we depart Les Rousses. Our visit today is to a small artisan manufacturer making cheeses in the style of Tomme, Raclette, Morbier and Comte but using slightly different manufacturing techniques and adding their own inspired names to each cheese. We also get to view their impressive affinage rooms where they store and mature their cheeses on wooden ageing boards.

For lunch, we drive across the border to the lovely Lac Léman in Geneva for a relaxing long lunch beside this beautiful lake.

We then head towards the beautiful and ancient mountain village of Château-Chalon, nominated as one of the 'most beautiful villages of France'. This stunning village is perched on an escarpment with spectacular views of the villages and vineyards below. Our Chambre d'hôtes accommodation is set in amongst the vineyards.



When we arrive at our accommodation, we have a personalised wine tasting by Eric (our Chambre d'hôtes host), and an organic wine grower. We will visit his vineyards and underground cellar as he explains why he makes wine organically. This evening we visit a small artisan goat cheese maker. We see the goats being walked down a laneway to a small milking parlour where they are milked by hand. The milk is then cooled in the local stream to the correct temperature. We then move to the cheesery to see the small amounts of milk crafted into delicate fresh cheeses.

DAY 7

Today we visit a small fromagerie producing cheese from just a few hundred litres of goat milk per day. We will view the goats being milked, and how they utilise simple cheesemaking methods to manufacture fresh and matured cheeses which are sold exclusively to local restaurants and shops.

After our fromagerie visit, we head to the village of Arbois and enjoy a guided tour of the home of Louis Pasteur and then to our third winery to see cellars with large wooden barrels followed by a wine tasting of their impressive wines.

We will then visit a local store selling equipment for French, commercial and home cheesemakers. There is a delightful array of items for you to look over and if you want, to purchase items.

The day concludes with our farewell dinner. The evening commences with pre-dinner drinks and Champagne, followed by a fine dining experience comprising specially selected local seasonal French produce: hams, salami, fruits, vegetables, and wines,

featuring a lovely baked Mont d'Or cheese, a perfect way to enter our last evening together.

DAY 8

Following a leisurely breakfast, we make our way back to Dijon, arriving before 10 am. We bid you farewell as you continue the remainder of your journey, whether home or on new adventures.

What is included?

Meals

- full French breakfast each day (days 2 to 8)
- at least 3 picnic lunches (weather permitting)
- complimentary pre-dinner drinks each evening
- restaurant dinner each night including complimentary wine and coffee

Transport

- 2 x 9-seater air-conditioned vans

Accommodation

- Hotel in Dijon (2 nights)
- Hotel in Les Rousses (3 nights)
- Chambre d'hôtes accommodation in Château-Chalon (2 nights)

Activities

Entry to the activities below is complimentary and facilitated by the tour leader, Graham Redhead from Cheesemaking and our French interpreter, Emilie, also a cheesemaker:

- guided walking tour of Dijon including a visit to Les Halles, one of France's popular undercover food markets
- French 3 course cooking class
- visit a range of artisan cheesemakers and their affinage facilities to observe cheese production methods using either goat, cow or sheep, milk including lactic acid cheeses, fresh as well as aged cheeses. Pressed cheeses including Comté, Morbier and Tomme. Blue vein cheese and Camembert.
- three wine tastings
- optional post lunch walks to local cascades, waterfalls and a historical Abbey
- guided tour through the home of Louis Pasteur
- entry into one of the world's largest underground affinage rooms

What is not included

- Accommodation on the 13 May and breakfast on the 14 May
- International airfares, domestic train fares
- Passport and visa fees
- Travel insurance
- Sightseeing and general expenses not specified in the 'Activities'
- Morning and afternoon tea and lunches



Testimonials

'I cannot recommend this tour highly enough ... you get to experience authentic artisan cheesemaking, visit villages and have experiences that you won't have any other way.'
– Melanie

'I was to learn far more than I ever anticipated. The tour was extensive ... exceptional value ... and in the process met a group of cheese enthusiasts with the same desire to learn more and share their ideas.' – Jan

'The French cheesemaking tour far exceeded my expectations ... I loved the flexibility of activities and the fact that it was so much more than cheesemaking.' – Sara

'Graham what a great concept this is – a unique experience for the home cheesemaker ... the small group provided a wonderful opportunity to meet and establish new friendships with fellow enthusiasts.' – Rod and Linda

'The other aspects of the tour were brilliant also, the countryside in that region of France is so beautiful and the food was great. There were plenty of interesting non-cheesemaking activities too.' – Kelly

Read more testimonials online at:

www.cheesemaking.com.au/tour-testimonials/



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