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itineraries*

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Sample Tour Program

*featuring Rouen, Colleville-sur-Mer, St. Malo,
Loire Valley, Chartres, and Paris*

day 1 – Overnight flight

Begin your 10-day European Performance Tour with today's overnight trans-Atlantic flight.

day 2 – Normandy area

Arrive in Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport, and meet with your **full-time bilingual tour manager** who will welcome you to France. Sightseeing begins right away, as you transfer to the Normandy Region. Along the way, visit the city of Rouen, with free time for lunch, before meeting with a **local guide** for a walking tour highlighting the exterior of Cathedral Notre-Dame de Rouen, the tallest cathedral in France, and the famous subject of a series of paintings by Claude Monet, and the market square, where a cross marks the spot where 19-year-old military leader and Catholic Saint Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake in the 15th century. Included is a visit to the **Historial Jeanne d'Arc Museum**, with **museum guide**. Continue to your hotel and refresh from the day. **Dinner** is provided at a local seafood restaurant within walking distance, to enjoy the fruit de la mer (fruit of the sea).

day 3 – Normandy area

Breakfast is served at the hotel this morning, and each day for the remainder of your trip. Today's excursion brings you north to the Cote d'Albatre with your tour manager; the 80-mile stretch of the Alabaster Coast mirrors those of the English White Cliffs of Dover, and represents their shared geological history. First visit Fecamp, which captivated the Impressionists. From the plateau of the Pays de Caux, there are endless vies of the coast, and on the southwest cliff there is a surprise waterfall. Etretat displays nature's miraculously fragile beauty. This once simple fishing village gained renown for its oysters, and was a 19th century inspiration for artists, writers, and numerous opera composers and singers. **There is the opportunity to walk up the hill and provide an informal performance at the small Chapelle Notre-dame de la Garde!** Return to your hotel, and enjoy free time on your own or with your tour manager. **Dinner** is served at a local restaurant.

day 4 – Saint Malo

Breakfast at the hotel. Explorations of Normandy continue with a heart-touching schedule. The ensemble will memorialize WWII and the American troops who died in Europe, with visits to the now peaceful setting at Omaha Beach, and the **Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial Visitor Center** in Colleville-sur-Mer. **Participate in a tribute recital, as part of a memorial wreath laying ceremony!** It was here at the D-Day beaches where thousands of Allied troops arrived to defend the coast against Germany, on June 6, 1944. The Battle of Normandy was a significant turning point in the war, and led to the liberation of Paris and the restoration of the French Republic. Your **local guide**

will prepare you for the deserted bunkers and beaches that remain as sobering reminders of the war. Continue to the walled port city of St. Malo, where you can stroll along the ramparts for magnificent views of the sea and the city down below. Crêperies are found through Brittany and Normandy, and are a regional specialty. A three-course **crêpes dinner** provides both savory galettes and sweet desert options, along with Brittany's famous local cider.

day 5 – Saint Malo

Breakfast at the hotel. Today's excursion brings you to Mont Saint-Michel, one of the most picturesque destinations in all of France, and a UNESCO World Heritage site, located on a small island and straddling the coast. Famously perched on the top of a rocky island, the village is accessible only by foot, and you will visit the Romanesque-Gothic abbey complex, by walking along the ramparts; expect steep grades, and many stairs today. A **guided tour** will share the history, which as a Christian center dates to the 8th century. Enjoy leisure time in the tiny village for lunch and further sightseeing on your own. **Return to Saint-Malo and present an area concert this evening at a local venue custom selected for your ensemble! There is the opportunity to make this an exchange and joint performance with a local ensemble. A warm-up rehearsal is provided prior to your performance. Dinner** is served at a local restaurant.

day 6 – Loire Valley

Breakfast at the hotel. Depart for the Loire Valley, home to French splendor, style, and gastronomy. Arrive in Amboise, where your tour manager will lead your discovery of the area's famous chateaux. Perched high on a bluff above the Loire, the royal **Chateau d'Amboise** was residence of Charles VIII. It also houses the grave of Leonardo da Vinci in the Saint Huber Chapel. There is free time in the village to see the main square, Place Debré, great for shopping, eating, and people watching. This afternoon visit **Château du Clos Lucé** and **Leonardo da Vinci Park**. Step back in time as you learn about the history of da Vinci, one of the world's most famous inventors and artists. While the castle was once home to King Francis I, today it stands as a museum to the great painter's works, and is where da Vinci spent the last three years of his life. Wander the halls and explore more than 40 models of his design. Then, move on to the park to admire more of his inventions, including flying machines, bridges, and weapons. Check in to your unique castle lodgings, where a special **dinner** is provided this evening.

day 7 – Paris

Breakfast at the hotel. Enjoy further exploration and the quiet beauty of the region, with a visit to **Château de Chenonceau**. The magnificent château of six women is built over the River Cher and is an exquisite example of Renaissance design (with included audio guide). The rooms are home to artistic masterpieces, tapestries, paintings and furniture, and the gardens are some of the finest in Europe, spread over 70 hectares, and including an Italian maze to get lost in. Enjoy free time for exploration, and lunch on your own at the château's self-service restaurant and creperie. Continue to the town of Chartres for the afternoon. Included is a visit to **Chartres Cathedral** with their **local guide**. The finest Gothic cathedral in France, and featured as part of the first UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Note-worthy is the exceptional state of preservation, and the amazing stained glass—most of which has survived intact. Subject to their schedule, cathedral authorities routinely remove chairs on Fridays to uncover the labyrinth and allow it to be walked. **A spiritual and musical highlight for any Choir is their service participation at Chartres Cathedral's mass, along with a short recital of sacred music! A warm-up rehearsal is provided prior to your performance. Dinner** is provided at a local restaurant, before taking an evening stroll through town to enjoy "Chartres en Lumieres", a festival of light promoting Chartres' heritage. Continue to Paris for check-in to your hotel, and the overnight.

day 8 – Paris

Breakfast at the hotel. Sightseeing of Paris begins with an introductory panoramic tour, with **local guide**. See the icons and monuments, including the 35-foot replica of The Statue of Liberty on the Île des Cygnes, Eiffel Tower, Louis XIV's gilded church dome of Les Invalides, Place de la Concorde, and Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe. Included is a walk through the **Père Lachaise Cemetery**; the largest in the city, and home to the graves of many who have enhanced French life over the last two centuries, including composers, musicians, writers, and artists such as Jim Morrison, Oscar Wilde, Georges Bizet, Maria Callas, Edith Piaf, and Frédéric Chopin. Tour through Montmartre to see the Moulin Rouge, stroll the narrow streets, and learn of the neighborhood's history as a great art colony of the 19th century. Climb the steps of the Basilica Sacré-Coeur, and bask in the wonderful views of the city. There is free time for lunch, and interaction with local artists at Place du Tertre; you might hire one for a caricature to bring home. **Perform an area concert this**

evening at a local venue custom selected for your ensemble! A warm-up rehearsal is provided prior to your performance. This evening, share **dinner** with your new friends at a local restaurant.

As an alternative, you might enjoy a guided musical tour of Europe's largest opera house, **Palais Garnier. Learn how the building inspired the setting for The Phantom of the Opera, and see the treasures of this celebrated theater. Highlights include the fresco and gold adorned Grand Foyer, the Grand Staircase, and the auditorium's Marc Chagall ceiling, surrounding the seven-ton crystal and bronze chandelier.*

day 9 – Paris

Breakfast at the hotel. This morning visit the historic Ile de la Cité with your tour manager. Here you can view the celebrated Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris, which remains at the spiritual heart of Paris despite the fire; there is time for reflection and a moment of silence. **There may be the opportunity to provide an informal tribute performance to "Our Lady" at the nearby Square Rene Viviani, overlooking the cathedral!** This afternoon there is entrance to the famed **Musée du Louvre** for a **guided tour** of their incredible collection, including the Venus de Milo, Leonardo's Mona Lisa, and Michelangelo's Slaves. There is free time for lunch and to explore on your own or in small groups. This evening celebrate your final evening in France with a traditional **dinner** at a local bistro, and further sights of Paris from the comfort of your illuminated **Seine River cruise**.

day 10 – Departure

Enjoy a final **breakfast** at the hotel before transferring to the airport for your return flight home. Your tour manager will assist with airport check-in, and there is time for one last *au revoir*!

