

LuxuryTravelGuide

AN INSIGHT FOR THE AFFLUENT TRAVELLER

DOMAINES & TERRIORS

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A JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE WITH DOMAINES & TERROIRS

Domaines & Terroirs was founded as a cultural, learning and, above all, culinary tour company, offering journeys through the regions of France that are best known for their artisanal products. Proposing experiences across the country, from Normandy to Provence, guests will be lead on an exploration of France's famous *terroirs*; regions defined by a set of special geographical characteristics and outstanding agriculture.

The company was formed by Debbi Baron, a native Californian with a deep respect and interest in fine craftsmanship. A job with an internationally known architecture and design firm allowed Debbi to put this interest (in addition to a degree in Three-dimensional Design) to practical use; she developed her knowledge of artisanal products through research and sourcing the best producers, artisans and craftsmen all over the world for clients. For Debbi, the ever mutable cheese has always been a passion and with cheese as starting point, she began to investigate the people and their environment and cultures that create this extraordinary foodstuff. In the process, this search expanded to the multitude of other specialities within each of these significant regions or areas.

Together with a French partner – Jean-Paul Bignand, whose passion for discovering the French countryside and French cheeses helped fuel the research, Domaines & Terroirs was created to explore what makes these exquisite products of man and nature what they are, from the traditions, to the people, through the culture. Both Debbi and Jean-Paul gain immense pleasure in offering like-minded visitors the chance to access a side of France that few travellers get to experience. In addition to trips in France, Domaines & Terroirs also offer experiences in the UK, Ireland and eventually the United States.





DOMAINES
&
TERROIRS™

THE EXPERIENCE

Domaines & Terroirs is a true ambassador of the French countryside. Offering bespoke tours, or *journeys*, to Alsace, Burgundy, Causses, Normandy, Paris, Pays Basque, Provence and the Alps, Domaines & Terroirs' journeys differ from other regional tours in three distinct ways; each journey is all inclusive (including accommodation, food, transportations, entry fees and tasting) offers the full time services of a knowledgeable guide and only cater for small groups of like-minded adults who enjoy opportunities to combine travel and cultural learning.

Because Domaines & Terroirs understand that every guest enjoys a holiday in their own unique way, they offer two different travel formulas; on a 'Terroirs Journey' guests stay in accommodations, usually three star, that show off the region's distinct character, whilst a 'Domaines Journey' offers a higher level of comfort and four star stays. Domaines & Terroirs can also customise their journeys to suit the needs of their guests; in addition to group journeys, which allow participants to meet other like-minded travellers, guests can opt for a more personal experience. Private groups allow friends or families to enjoy a pre-existing, scheduled journey exclusively with their own group, whilst personalised group journeys allow for a higher level of flexibility – guests can explore a specific region and choose their own itinerary. In addition, Domaines & Terroirs offer corporate group journeys; ideal for companies who wish to reward customers or employees, team building exercises and conventions, Domaines & Terroirs can plan the journey to suit your distinct needs.

AN **INSIGHT** TO THE TERROIRS OF FRANCE

Domaines & Terroirs are truly connoisseurs of provincial France. Not simply offering tours of French culture and cuisine, they offer journeys designed to engage and challenge the senses; although a focus on cheese is the highlight of any Domaines & Terroirs journey, guests can also enjoy a wealth of regional food and wine, authentic accommodations and rustic landscapes.

The Luxury Travel Guide spoke with Domaines & Terroirs Managing Director Debbi Baron about the best attractions the French Provinces have to offer, where to find the best regional delicacies and the benefits of discovering France with Domaines & Terroirs.

Q

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO SET UP DOMAINES & TERROIRS?

A designer by trade, and a cheese lover at heart, I have always enjoyed discovering beautiful products and materials. In particular, the work of local artisans and craftsmen who create handmade objects and products has always inspired me to delve deeper into their process to understand the associated traditions and cultural obligations.

Cheese has long represented the true expression of the concept of *terroir* – the sense of place where the effects of the local environment combine with the traditions of the place and that of human intervention. Accessing the beautiful and rich countryside where this marvel of nature and man is produced,

one discovers not only the beguiling results but the people who dedicate their lives to creating these handmade, artisanal products which continue to reinforce the traditions of their region.

**“I HAVE ALWAYS ENJOYED
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PRODUCTS AND
MATERIALS”**

It is at this intersection of discovery and exploration that Domaines & Terroirs was created. With a love of cheese at the heart of the journey, we offer our fellow culinary adventurers a way to enter into the world of the cultural, culinary and artisanal wonders of regional France.

Q

ASIDE FROM YOUR DAY TOURS, DO YOU OFFER EXTENDED VISITS?

Domaines & Terroirs offers not only day events in and around Paris but longer journeys into the French cheese-making countryside. Our day tours are designed for those visiting Paris who wish to either discover or improve their knowledge of cheese and the traditions that surround them. We open the door to French cheese for our guests – varieties, histories, selection, presentation and, of course, tasting. Our journeys are an extension of this discovery. We offer an opportunity to explore different regions and terroirs of France where cheeses are produced, to learn about them, the culture surrounding them, the people who produce them and the countryside and traditions that support them.



Q DOES DOMAINES & TERROIRS ATTRACT A SPECIFIC TYPE OF TRAVELLER?

We like to say our guests are urbane knowledge seekers. These are people who seek something different, something that allows them access to more than just the average tourist sites. Our guests are adventurers, eager to enrich their lives and expand their understanding of people, culture, traditions and, of course, the edible products of a place not normally available at first glance.

“OUR GUESTS ARE ADVENTURERS, EAGER TO ENRICH THEIR LIVES AND EXPAND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLE”

Q WHAT CAN YOUR GUESTS EXPECT FROM A TOUR WITH YOU?

Our journeys are designed for discovery. Our guests can expect the unusual; an itinerary that unearths something not normally available from traditional tour operators – rural France. We create journeys that highlight all the wonderful things *la France profonde* (The Provinces of France) has to offer, juxtaposed with interesting regional attractions. We offer several levels of travel accommodation, with or without private drivers and guides, as well as the capability to customise their journey.

Q WHICH TOURS ARE CURRENTLY THE MOST POPULAR AND WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS?

Other than the *Cheese Tasting with the Experts* event in Paris, some of our most popular journeys are expeditions into the less visited south western France; les Causses and le Pays Cathares located in the Midi-Pyrénées; Languedoc Roussillon to discover the famous goat's cheese, Rocamadour, or the even more famous sheep's milk cheese, Roquefort; Normandy with all of creamy cow's milk cheeses like Camembert and Burgundy, home of fabulous wines and the king of cheese, Époisses.

“OUR JOURNEYS ARE DESIGNED FOR DISCOVERY”

Each of these journeys offers a different appeal. Normandy is popular because Camembert is a world renowned cheese but also one can discover others such as Livarot and Pont l'Évêque. The journeys to Burgundy and the land of Époisses are truly for the cheese aficionado and wine connoisseur, while those to the southwest of France are for the knowledgeable cheese lovers looking for the rare and unusual and seeking the sublime Rocamadour and the famous Roquefort, as well as all things duck and truffle and little known but amazing wines.

Q HOW DO YOU SELECT WHICH DESTINATIONS TO VISIT?

The design of one of our journeys begins with a regional cheese, for instance, Époisses and Burgundy; Rocamadour and the Lot; Roquefort and les Causses; Munster and Alsace or Camembert and Normandy. We then begin to build the experience of the region, people and culinary traditions that support that cheese. The journey provides our guests a total immersion into what makes that cheese the amazing artisanal product it is.



Q WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE TOUR AND WHY?

Each of our journeys is unique! There is something for every taste. So it is impossible to choose one over the other. If you are looking for unspoiled and rarely visited France, try the Causses journeys; if you are looking for the sublime, try Burgundy or maybe you are searching for a place where bucolic meets the sea, try a Normandy journey then. If you are looking to expand your cheese knowledge but don't have lots of time, try a *Cheese Tasting with the Experts* with us here in Paris.

Q WHAT IS INCLUDED IN EACH TOUR AND HOW DO YOU TAILOR THE EXPERIENCE FOR EACH CUSTOMER?

For our journeys, each is tailored to the guest's needs and interests. We will create your personal tour with you, suggesting itinerary options, places to see, visits to producers, tastings, restaurants and hotels that represent the region. Once the journey is fixed, we will make all the ground arrangements and reservations, provide private drivers, guides, or create a self-guided package that allows the guest to go at their own pace. We are available throughout the journey to assist our guests when necessary to make their journey a smooth, seamless experience.

For our Paris events, our guests will spend the day with us touring some of the finest Parisian fromageries, meeting the best fromagers. They then will spend the rest of the day learning about the French seasonal cheeses that are available to them at the time, how to select them, how to present them and, of course, how to taste them, all in the conviviality of a beautiful Parisian apartment.

Q AS A LOCAL EXPERT CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THE HIDDEN ATTRACTIONS OF THE PROVINCES OF FRANCE?

La France profonde is full of hidden attractions. One could spend their whole life exploring them. But, besides the fabulous cheeses on offer, a few things not to be missed would be the limestone caverns in Roquefort; visiting the horde of the Most Beautiful Villages of France in the Lot; meeting the fabulous Monsieur Lechevallier at La Fromagerie de la Houssaye in Normandy or the dedicated Rémond brothers at La Fromagerie le Pic in the heart of the Lot; meeting the dedicated duck and goose farmers in the Lot and Alsace or comparing an Époisses to a Soumaintrain to a l'Ami du Chambertin in a Burgundian Renaissance chateau or participating in the renowned la Cérémonie des Fromages with the even more renown Monsieur Bernard Antony at his käs-kaller in southern Alsace... the list goes on.



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