Join us on this 16-day journey through the west of France, beginning with the splendid 18th-century commercial buildings of Bordeaux, then winding through the vineyards of Aquitaine, exploring the chateaux towering over the Dordogne River, marvelling at the Old- Stone-Age cave paintings of Lascaux, staying in the charming medieval town of Sarlat, and ending at the 12th-century fortified town of Carcassonne.

Our leisurely itinerary will take us to six UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Bordeaux, the 11th-century Abbey of La Sauve-Majeure, Périgueux’s Cathedral of Saint-Front, the prehistoric caves, the narrow medieval streets of Conque, and the walls of Carcassonne. We’ll explore the vineyards of Saint-Émilion and Corbières, the Gallo-Roman city of Vessuna, the pilgrimage city of Rocamadour, the cave village of Roc Saint-Christophe, and the prosperous 16th-century buildings of Albi.

At the charming village of Roque Gageac we’ll take a short trip down the Dordogne in a wooden boat modelled on the traditional river craft of the region, and near Carcassonne we’ll cruise the Canal du Midi. We’ll visit some small but fascinating museums: a Gallo-Roman house decorated with painted plaster; the house of Champollion, the scholar who deciphered the Egyptian hieroglyphs of the Rosetta Stone; and a bishop’s palace holding the world’s largest collection of works by Toulouse Lautrec.

En route we’ll enjoy wine tastings at chateaux, and you will have lots of time for exploring, shopping, and dining on your own. Most of our hotels are small and historic: an 18th-century building in the centre of Bordeaux, rooms overlooking a defensive tower in Sarlat, a 12th-century priory founded by the Knights Templar in Grèze, and a 15th-century house nestled in the heart of Carcassonne’s citadel. We’ve chosen some gastronomic restaurants to give you the best possible experience of food and wines of the region; many are located in our hotels, and one is a Michelin 1-star establishment.

ORIENTATION
The orientation course will consist of five Wednesday evenings, from March 28 to April 25, 2012, 7 – 9:30 pm, held at the University of Calgary campus. Discussion topics include history and culture of France, civilization of the region, and background information on the sites we will be visiting. The itinerary, travel arrangements, and health matters will be discussed in detail.
ITINERARY

Meals included: breakfast daily, and lunch or dinner.

MAY 21 – 22 Fly from Calgary to Bordeaux.

MAY 23 – 24 Bordeaux. Among the sights that we will visit in the city are the Aquitaine Museum, which follows Bordeaux’s history from prehistoric times to the present, the Cathedral, and a walking tour of the recently refurbished old city. We will take two excursions: one to Saint-Émilion, with its justly famous vineyards and a monolithic church, and to the Château de Vayres; the other to the Abbey of La Sauve-Majeure and the Château of the Dukes of Épernon.

MAY 25 – 28 Sarlat. En route from Bordeaux to Sarlat, we’ll pass through Périgueux, where we visit the Cathedral and, after lunch at a restaurant nearby, explore the ancient site of Vesunna. During our three full days in and around Sarlat, we begin with a walking tour of the city, and then drive to the picturesque village of Roque Gageac. One morning we’ll drive the short distance to Rocamadour, perhaps the most stunningly situated town in the Dordogne, and return to Sarlat after lunch for a free afternoon of shopping and resting. Another day is full of archaeological spectacles: first, the reconstructed cave at Lascaux, with its stunning Palaeolithic paintings of humans, animals, and the hunt; and, in the afternoon, the Roque Saint-Christophe, a village tucked under a massive overhanging rock, and inhabited from antiquity through the Middle Ages.

MAY 29 Cahors. Picturesquely situated on a bend in the River Lot, Cahors was the old capital of Quercy and, in medieval times, an important commercial and university town. Its elegant bridge across the river will be the highlight of our walking tour. Free afternoon.

MAY 30 Grèze. From Cahors we visit the cave of Pech Merle, with its painting of spotted horses, and pass through the medieval town of Figeac before arriving at our charming hotel in Grèze, where we’ll enjoy a gastronomic dinner.

MAY 31 – JUNE 1 Albi. After a short walking tour of Figeac and a visit to the Champollion Museum to practise our hieroglyphs, we visit medieval Conques and arrive in Albi, where our hotel’s restaurant specializes in local specialties. The next day a walking tour of Albi will introduce us to the history of the city, including the Albigensian heresy of the 12th and 13th centuries, the fortress-like Gothic cathedral, and the 16th-century production of woad that brought such prosperity.

JUNE 2 – 4 Carcassonne. From Albi we drive through the beautiful landscapes of the Montagne Noire and the Parc Régional du Haut-Languedoc to Carcassonne. The next morning we set out on a walking tour of the medieval citadel, at the end of which we’ll find ourselves at La Barbacane, our Michelin-starred restaurant where we’ll have the lunch of our lives. Later in the afternoon, we embark on the Canal du Midi for a cruise that will present us with a panoramic view of Carcassonne, rows of sycamore trees on the two banks, and several 17th-century locks to negotiate. For our last day of touring, we visit the wine region of nearby Corbières, including 11th-century Cathar fortresses perched on high rocks and a tasting of Corbières wine, before returning to Carcassonne for our gastronomic farewell dinner.

JUNE 5 Return to Calgary.

ACCOMPANYING RESOURCE PERSON

Dr. John Humphrey is a professor of history and archaeology in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies at the University of Calgary. He has excavated at sites in Greece and Turkey, and now specializes in the history of ancient technology, on which he has published two books. Since his first in 1977, he has planned and accompanied more Continuing Education trips than he can remember, to Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Cyprus.

COST

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**COST INCLUDES** Tuition and five-week orientation course, airfare, accommodation, transfers, all surface travel, and meals as listed in the itinerary. A deposit of $500 is required with the registration form. There is a $200 withdrawal fee prior to the final payment date. Final payment is due on December 6, 2011. Please see the Refund Policy section for withdrawal/refund procedures and liabilities. Fees are based on the information available at the time of print and are subject to change to reflect any changes in currency rates, airfares, or land costs. There are possibilities of decreases or increases, and any changes will be reflected on the final payment and passed on to the participant. All fees are based on double occupancy.