

Gastronomic Getaway

The Academy of Culinary Arts is pleased to invite its members and friends to a truffle-inspired gastronomic getaway weekend in January 2012 to Carcassonne, situated in the Languedoc region of southwest France.



This wonderful and unique trip includes a luxury two-night stay at a five-star hotel, a truffle-themed seven-course Michelin star dinner, truffle hunting with dogs, a visit to a truffle museum & truffle tasting. The weekend will be capped off by a visit to the village of Moussoulens (located near Carcassonne in the Carbardès at the foot of the Black Mountain) where you will join in the village's black truffle festival known as the Ampélofolies of Carbardès.

The festival - little known outside the region but passionately supported by local truffle enthusiasts - also showcases local wines and "cuisine de terroir", which includes cured meats, cheeses and baked products (as well as hand-crafted souvenir items). The wines are exhibited by local growers and feature the high-quality AOC Carbardès including grape varieties Syrah, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Visitors to the festival are encouraged to freely sample wines and food products.

The highlight of the Moussoulens festival is its truffle auction - a frenzied period of activity beginning with a shotgun blast when truffle harvesters sell their wares to the general public. This activity is highly regulated by local laws and customs and all truffles offered for sale have

been carefully scrutinized and graded prior to the auction.

Known locally as "black diamonds", the truffles that you will see at the Moussoulens festival are the most desired variety which grow at the base of green oak trees and are at their most fragrant stage during our visit. Perigord truffles are highly sought after and command prices of upwards of £1,000 per kilo. During your Moussoulens visit you will benefit from advice and information from a local truffle expert.



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The action-packed weekend begins on the afternoon of **Friday 20 January** with a departure on EasyJet from London Gatwick to Toulouse Blagnac airport. A coach transfer to Carcassonne (50 mins) will take you to the Hotel de la Cité in the ancient walled fortress of Carcassonne (the modern city lies close by below the ramparts). Hotel de la Cité is a fabulously luxurious five-star hotel which will be your base for the weekend.

Carcassonne is actually two cities in one. Besides the



Saturday 21 January starts with a delicious breakfast in Chez Saskia (located within the hotel) before a gentle stroll down to lower Carcassonne and its bustling Saturday market located in the heart of the town. You

will have the chance to visit the market, take a coffee at one of the numerous cafes dotted around the square and shop at your leisure. Guests will make their own plans for lunch prior to re-grouping for a visit to the newly-opened Truffle museum, where you will receive a private presentation from its curator. The highlight of the afternoon then comes with your chance to search for the elusive truffle. A local expert will be on hand with

pretty-as-a-picture walled city (La Cité) there is also a low-key, lower town that dates back to the Middle Ages. Known as the Bastide Saint Louis, it features typically French bars, shops, cafés and restaurants, as well as all the standard services and amenities you'd expect. Its medieval core, the Cité, was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1997.

After check-in, guests will have time to freshen up before gathering in the hotel lobby for a two-minute walk to a welcome dinner at the locally renowned Comte Roger restaurant under the direction of chef/proprietor Pierre Mesa. Following dinner it's back to the hotel where your comfortable bed awaits.

his highly-trained dogs as you are led into the French countryside on a truffle hunt.

After the truffle hunt, those who wish can relax back at the hotel. Those wishing to immerse themselves into the French sporting calendar can experience a rugby match in town between Carcassonne and Grenoble. Carcassonne plays in France's Pro D2 division and was the 2010 Fédérale champions.

The group will assemble in the bar of the Hotel de la Cité for a pre-dinner drink before sitting down in the Michelin-starred La Barbacane restaurant and enjoying truffle-inspired fantastic seven course gourmet dinner especially created for us by award-winning Chef Jérôme Ryon. A succession of locally produced wines will accompany the dinner, after which the group returns to the hotel.



Sunday 22 January begins with a leisurely breakfast at the hotel. Guests will then check out and depart the hotel and transfer to Mousoulens, arriving about

midday, to enjoy the black truffle festival called the Ampéfolies de Carbardès. Departure is direct from Mousoulens to Toulouse Blagnac for the return flight to London Gatwick.

Truffle Trip Itinerary

20-Jan	13:35	Depart London Gatwick on Easy Jet
	16:20	Arrive Toulouse Blagnac
	17:00	Transfer to Carcassonne
	18:00	Arrive Hotel de la Cité
	19:30	Dinner at Chez Mesa
	22:00	Post dinner drinks at hotel
21-Jan	08:00	Breakfast at hotel
	09:00	Stroll to Carcassonne market
	12:30	Light lunch in Carcassonne
	14:00	Transfer to Truffle museum
	15:00	Truffle hunt with dogs
	18:00	Rugby with Carcassonne v Grenoble (optional)
	20:15	Truffle inspired seven course Michelin starred dinner with wines
22-Jan	08:00	Breakfast at hotel
	11:00	Checkout
	11:30	Transfer to Mousoulens truffle festival
	14:45	Transfer to Toulouse Blagnac
	16:50	Depart Toulouse Blagnac
	17:55	Arrive London Gatwick

Cost:

£690 per person
(based upon double occupancy)
includes both dinners and
wine, breakfasts and all visits