The Festival site

The 2013 French Feast of Tabernacles site will be the village of Saint-Jean-la-Vêtre, located in south-central France about halfway between Lyon and Clermont-Ferrand. In the heart of France, this land of volcanoes, forests, valleys, lakes and rivers offers numerous vistas. The area surrounding the village, referred to as Le Forez, is known for its natural beauty. Situated in the mountains and surrounded by forest, views from this village include the surrounding countryside and the neighboring mountains of Le Forez. The VVF Villages vacation colony has been reserved for our exclusive use this year. This is an all-inclusive site, providing room and three meals per day, featuring multiple-course lunches and dinners that include wine. Services and most social activities will also take place on-site. All the lodgings are small apartments with kitchenettes; all but three of the apartments have three or four steps between levels. This is a lovely rural location; there are no stores in the immediate vicinity.

Passports and visas:

American and Canadian citizens need a valid passport for travel to France, but no visa is currently required if the visit is less than 90 days. For citizens of the EU, a national ID card is all that is required. Visitors from countries other than those mentioned above should check online or with a French consulate to learn if they need a visa.

Address:

VVF Villages
Ventuel
42440 Saint-Jean-La-Vêtre
France

Telephone:

Phone (from outside of France): +33.4.77.97.82.42; phone (within France): 04.77.97.82.42

Access by air:

By air it is best to arrive at the Clermont-Ferrand airport. From there, it is approximately a one-hour drive to the site via the A-89 toll road. Upon registration, you may sign up for a shuttle to/from either airport for a fee of 20 euros per person each way.

Access by train:

The nearest train station is in Noirétable, 8 kilometers (6.5 miles) from the site. We can arrange a shuttle from/to this train station if there is a need. See this website to help you plan train travel: http://www.tgv-europe.com/en/choose-country/index.php.

Access by car:

A mapping website such as http://www.viamichelin.com can provide you with a detailed itinerary from your own starting point.
Lodging:
The accommodations are similar to small, simple apartments. Each unit has a kitchenette. The rooms are clean but basic by North American standards. All apartments have their own toilet and shower. Bedding and bath towels will be supplied at the beginning of the Feast and changed once during your stay (soap and washcloths are not supplied). Extra linen and towel changes will be available for a small charge. Maid service is not automatically provided, but is also available for a small charge.

It is not possible to arrive earlier than Sept. 18.

This site is not a hotel; one cannot arrive and get a room without previously booking.

Electricity:
The electrical current in France is 200-220 volts, 50 cycles. This will burn out North American appliances if no transformer is used. (In the past, several visitors attending the Feast in France have had “bad hair days” due to short-lived but supercharged curling irons.) Note that a transformer is not the same thing as an adapter. An adapter is the plug that allows the appliance to be connected to the wall outlet. The sockets in France generally have two thin cylindrical prongs, rather than the rectangular flat type found in North America. A transformer is a separate item (a small box) that actually modifies the electrical current. Several companies market travel sets that include both a transformer and several European adapters. Such sets usually cost about $25 and are available at luggage shops or department stores.

Meals:
Since your lodging includes full board, three meals will be provided in the restaurant. Breakfast will be served buffet-style, while lunch and dinner will be served family-style at the table. French custom is not to serve a table until everyone has arrived and it is full. Please plan to be on time for lunch and dinner.

Meal schedule:
Breakfast: 7:30 to 9 a.m.
Lunch: 12:15 p.m.
Dinner: 7:15 p.m.

Services available:
Free parking is available. There is a coin-operated laundry facility. Wireless Internet is available in the common areas, which will be open during the day until the end of dinner. On-site recreational facilities include walking and hiking trails in the mountains, Ping-Pong and billiards, a pétanque court (we’ll show you how to play pétanque—you’ll love it!), a nonguarded covered swimming pool and hot tub, and a children’s playground.
Financial information

This year you will need to pay for your lodging in U.S. dollars. Members coming from the U.S. may pay by check. For those coming from countries other than the U.S., your bank can advise you as to the best means of sending money in foreign currency (international money order, cashier’s check, wire transfer, etc.). Offerings may be given in any major currency.

Exchanging money:

The currency now used in France is the euro. Exchange rates vary from day to day. At the time this form was prepared, one euro was worth approximately US$1.35.

Banking hours in small towns and villages are typically 9 a.m. to noon and 2 to 5 p.m. We recommend that you exchange at least a small amount of money before you leave on your trip, to ensure you will have some local currency when you arrive. An ATM card with which to withdraw euros from French ATMs is the easiest means of exchanging money in country. Your home bank account is debited in your home currency, and there is a small exchange fee.

It is always a good idea to have at least two different means of procuring euros, in case there is a problem with an ATM machine or with your card. We recommend bringing some cash for emergencies. Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted in France; American Express is accepted in very limited locations; Discover Card is unknown and not accepted.

Costs:

The prices include a small fee to help offset Festival expenses. These prices are for full board, including wine with lunch and dinner.

Per adult single occupancy: US$750
Per adult double occupancy: US$600
Per child aged 11-15: US$500
Per child aged 4-10: US$450
Per child aged 2-3: US$320
Per child aged 0-1: free

Feast registration

Residents of the United States of America:

If you are a U.S. resident, please begin by registering online at the COGWA Feast website: http://feast.cogwa.org/. Registration at cogwa.org must be complete by May 5. When asked during registration, please indicate that you will be attending the French Feast site. Once your initial registration is complete, an email will automatically be sent to the primary contact for your party. This email will contain a link to an additional registration page, specifically for the French Feast site at Saint Jean-la-Vêtre. As a resident of the United States, please complete both the U.S. and the 2013 France FOT online registration forms by June 30. Confirmation of acceptance to attend will be emailed within two weeks after your registration is complete. When you have been accepted, we will provide information on where to send your payment. For more information, you may contact the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, French Department at 513-722-0156.

Residents of other countries:

If you are not a U.S. resident and plan to attend the Feast in France, please do not register at the COGWA Feast website. Instead, please register online at the following website: https://cogwa.wufoo.com/forms/2013-france-fot/.

Registration at this website must be complete by June 30. Confirmation of acceptance to attend will be emailed within two weeks after your registration is complete. When you have been accepted, we will provide information on where to send your payment. For more information, you may contact the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, French Department at 513-722-0156.
Projected program and activities

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Church services and translation:

You do not need to understand French to attend this site. Approximately half of the services will be held in French; the other half, in English. In each case, a simultaneous translation will be provided via FM radios and earphones/headsets. Those wishing to make use of the translation service will need to provide their own FM radios, batteries (please bring spares), and earphones. We will not be able to provide radios, headsets or batteries at the site. Such items are usually less expensive in the United States and Canada than they would be in France. The first service will be held on Sept. 18 at 9 p.m.

Excursions:

Some afternoons during the Feast, coach excursions will be offered for a per-person price. The proposed list of excursions is below along with the approximate per-person price (exact information is pending). We ask you to indicate to us in advance which excursions interest you (so we might plan), though payment will be made upon your arrival at the Feast site.

1. Vichy – (20 euros per person) – This famous spa town is home to eclectic architecture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Vichy is famed as the home of the Vichy government during World War II, although the town tries to play down its association with Nazi Germany. We will explore Vichy’s past on a historical walking tour from the Tourist Office. The tour explores parts of World War II history, as well as Vichy’s architectural highlights, including the Convent of the Célestins, Castle Franc and the Pavillon Sevigne.

Vichy’s spa waters are one of its major attractions, and you can sample them at fountains throughout the town. The bronze taps called the Celestin on Boulevard de President Kennedy are a prime spot to try water from the springs. You might stop by the Vichy Spa Hotel Les Célestins (pictured at left), which offers hydrotherapy treatments using Vichy thermal water.

2. Clermont-Ferrand – (15 euros per person) – We will spend the afternoon touring the capital of the Auvergne region. Set amidst its exceptional surroundings, including the Puys Mountain Range and its volcanoes, Clermont-Ferrand sits near the former battlefield of Gergovia, where Vercingétorix (statue, pictured at right) defeated Caesar. To the north are the fertile plains of the Limagne; to the east, the sun rises over the wooded mountains of the Livradois-Forez, highlighting their remarkable beauty.

During the Middle Ages, Pope Urban II chose Clermont to announce the first crusade in 1095. Highlights of our tour will include two masterpieces that date back to this period: the Romanesque Notre-Dame-du-Port Basilica (on the UNESCO World Heritage list) and the Gothic cathedral built of Volvic stone, which houses a unique collection of stained-glass windows.
3. **Thiers – (15 euros per person)** – The name of Thiers, Celtic in origin, means the chieftain’s house. In the fifth century, Sidoine Apollinaire speaks of the city of Thiernum set around the church of St. Symphorien. Later in the 10th century, Thiers was a barony that had broken away from the County of Auvergne and was subject to invasions by the Saracens. This forced the Thiers people to establish a new town up on the rocky spur of the mountain, built around the seigniorial castle and the church of Saint Genès.

Montaigne, in the 16th century, described Thiers as a “ville fort marchande” (a strongly mercantile town). Cutlery, paper and leather ensured the prosperity of the town. In the 19th century, cutlery making became the major industry, and the industrial area that extends the length of the valley is living proof of this.

Our tour bus will drop us off at the heart of the medieval center of Thiers. From there, you will have the opportunity to explore the old quarter and view timbered houses built in the 15th to 17th centuries. You will pass the facades of the Hôtel du Pirou, the Maison des Sept Péchés Capitaux or l’Homme des Bois, and discover the complex architectural techniques of half-timbering, corbelled construction and cob walls.

4. **Puy de Dôme – (25 euros per person)** – This dormant volcano’s steep slopes rise dramatically to its summit at an altitude of 4,806 feet. It commands a magnificent view of the Monts Dômes chain. We will tour Vulcània, Europe’s only park based upon volcanism. The highlight of this park is riding on a special train that uses cogged wheels to climb and descend the steep slopes of the volcano along a rack railway.