



France

A Celebration of La Joie de Vivre

Come explore a dramatic coastline steeped in Celtic roots, Medieval villages, opulent châteaux, countless megalithic monuments, and a rich history of world-class textiles. France is a land that has attracted famous artists, writers, and lovers of all things divine. We invite you to fall under its enchanted spell...



September 3 - 13, 2023
With an optional extension
to the Dordogne to visit the Lascaux Cave
Paintings and Aubusson Tapestry



“Uncommon Textile Journeys that Change Lives”

Bienvenue en France



Tapestry in France, Then and Now...

Tapestry is one of the most ancient forms of woven textiles. French Tapestry has a rich history that stretches from the Middle Ages to today's contemporary creations (Rt photo: ©Tapestry by Dominique de Serres, who we will visit!).



Tapestry weaving enjoyed a boom between the 1350's to the end of the 18th century when the nobility commissioned heavy elaborate wall coverings. These fine textiles, woven from mostly wool with silk added for detail and depth, were practical as they insulated the cold rooms, kept draughts at bay and added decoration with their evocative images. They were also a sign of wealth. Henry VIII is reported to have had over 2,000 tapestries in his collection. Perhaps most important was that they were portable so they could be carried from castle to castle. Extraordinary examples of French tapestry can be seen throughout France. We will visit two of the most impressive tapestries in the country: *The Bayeux Tapestry* and *The Tapestry of the Apocalypse* as well as many others found in the châteaux throughout the Loire Valley.

The History of French Knitting and its Role in the Revolutionary War and World War II

Knitting in France may not be as commonly recognized as in some other countries, but make no mistake, French knitting has a long and interesting history. Dating from at least the medieval times, knitting was controlled by guilds and knitted garments were worn by the wealthy class.

Throughout history, the power of French knitters was used for good. Fast forward to the story of the *tricoteuses* which means “knitting women.” Think Madame Defarge in Dicken’s *Tale of Two Cities*. These tireless females knitted sitting next to the guillotine in the Place de la Revolution during the Reign of Terror. While they watched the executions, they knitted garments, socks, mittens, and scarves in political protest which they sold after the executions to support their families. But perhaps most influential were the red *Bonnets de la Liberte* that they knitted which became one of the symbols of the French Revolution worn by everyone in Paris.

More than a century later, during World Wars I and II, “Knitting Spies” used knitting as their covert messaging system to help the Allies. As Loretta Napoleoni explains in a fascinating article, “Positions of troops, numbers of weapons, movements of trains—everything can be hidden in a simple hat, in a pair of mittens, in a scarf. For the non-knitter, it is impossible to read the codes; even knitting patterns themselves appear to be written in a secret code.” All this history proves that knitting can change lives and influence politics and social change as it certainly did in France. So never underestimate the power of your needles!

Read the article: <https://lithub.com/on-the-covert-role-of-knitting-during-the-french-revolution-and-world-war-ii/>

Shirley Ann Scott “Shirl the Purl”, Author & Our Knitting Instructor

We love her so much! She is such fun, and her fiber expertise is so widely respected, that we are bringing her all the way to France from Newfoundland!

“Shirl the Purl” is a handknitter and a mitten designer who specializes in combining history with knitting. “I am intrigued by the way that people who lived precarious existences in wild rough places created works of knitted art, almost always without the benefit of such a simple thing as electric light, and often without the benefit of literacy. My work springs from admiration of their work.” Shirley is also the author of four amazing books of traditional Newfoundland designs. She loves to create heritage garments ensuring that the craft skills of our worthy ancestors are not lost. Shirley and co-author Christine LeGrow of Spindrift Handknits have collected and studied mittens from across Newfoundland for the past 40 years. Recognizing the value of these artifacts, they have expertly and painstakingly recreated more than 20 heritage patterns for today's knitter in their book *Saltwater Mittens*. We will have the honor of knitting with Shirley throughout our itinerary.



By Jean-Baptiste Lesueur (1749-1826) - <https://www.parismuseecollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-camille/oeuvres/tricoteuses>, Public Domain.



No need to be a knitter to enjoy the tour! You can choose to weave or embroider.

Our Accommodations in France at a Glance

Loom Dancer Odysseys never stays at “cookie-cutter” or ordinary chain hotels. We believe that our accommodations set the tone of the itinerary and provide a rich and cultural backdrop to the adventure. We are so excited about the character, quality, and diversity of our luxury accommodations in France! From a 17th century granite stone mansion to a luxury château; a seaside 20th century residence to a boutique hotel built from authentic 18th century stonework in a medieval city, we are thrilled to immerse ourselves in the ambiance of this enchanting country.

Château de Sully in Bayeux



Hotel Arvor in Medieval Dinan



Hotel Ti la Lannec on the Pink Granite Coast



Manoir de Moëllien in Brittany's Countryside



Château des Briotierres in the Loire Valley



Sunday, September 3 Paris to Bayeux and a Mohair Goat Farm

This morning we travel from Paris to the lovely town of Bayeux. You must be in Paris prior to this morning's departure. **
We will be picked up at a central Paris hotel (location to be determined) to board our private van and travel to Bayeux in Normandy. The drive is approximately 3 hours, and we will make interesting stops along the way.

One highlight is a stop at La Grange au Mohair, a mohair goat farm. Here we will enjoy a guided tour of the farm's production workshops, studio and exhibition room. There is a shop where we can buy knitting yarn, woven goods and bespoke knits and clothing design. And of course, we can have direct contact with the goats!

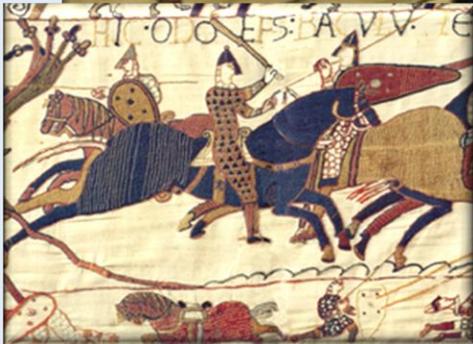
Bayeux is an elegant historical town in the Northwestern area of Normandy. The city has survived two world wars and boasts remarkable examples of diverse archeological heritage. Miraculously preserved from the bombings of World War II, the old city has developed within its original medieval walls. Filled with charming character, one can stroll along the banks of the River Aure to explore the old stone houses and waterwheels.

For our accommodation, we kick off our trip with an authentic French chateau experience. Our hotel, Château de Sully, is located a bit out of town in the Normandy countryside, set in the heart of a magnificent bucolic wooded park. Built in the 18th century, its rooms are decorated in a style true to the era. The chateau also boasts a spa just in case we need to recuperate from our travels. Of significant note is the Michelin-starred restaurant which is recognized for its artful and inventive seasonal cuisine and list of over 300 wines.

This evening, we'll meet for a welcome drink and orientation at our gorgeous chateau followed by dining as a group in the restaurant for a proper introduction into fine French cuisine. Overnight at Château de Sully. (D)



****You will need to be in Paris by the night of September 2nd for a morning departure on the 3rd bound for the Normandy countryside.**



Monday, September 4 The UNESCO Bayeux Tapestry & 2 Fiber Workshops

Bayeux is also home to a unique treasure, the *Bayeux Tapestry* which dates to the 11th century. How could we miss an opportunity to see such a magnificent relic of textile history? It is hard to find enough superlatives to describe the UNESCO

protected *Bayeux Tapestry*. At 230 feet in length, its fifty-eight scenes are a record of the events of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066. It is not technically a tapestry, but rather an embroidery but historically and globally referred to as a tapestry. The treasure is a tremendous example of the embroidery skills of the women of the 11th century nobility. It is a miracle that it has remained almost intact for over nine centuries.

Mesmerized by the intricacy of the “tapestry”, it almost seems like an enchanting medieval comic book as it weaves the story of the Hundred Year’s War between the French and the English. Its focus is on the conquest of England by the Normans. Legend suggests that Reine Mathilde (wife of William the Conqueror) and her court made the tapestry, though other sources suggest that it was designed and created by nuns in England.

We’ll spend time this morning in the *Bayeux Tapestry* Museum examining and learning about this incredible artifact. Then we enjoy an exclusive 2-hour, hands-on workshop learning Bayeux Point Embroidery technique with Cantal James of Bayeux Broderie. She will teach us the technique used in the 11th century to make the famous *Bayeux Tapestry*. We’ll return to our château in the late afternoon where we can begin our knitting workshop with “Shirl the Purl” in our magnificent surroundings. We will have the honor of working with Shirley throughout our itinerary on our projects. Or you may choose to weaver or embroider. Overnight at Château de Sully. (B)

“Our fiber project in France is an easy to knit scarf/shawl that is a perfect fit on everyone and will make you look as chic as any French girl! We’re having yarn specially dyed for this project. The much-loved Bleu de France shade is in the mix. You’ll take home a beautiful memento of the trip.”

~ Shirley “Shirl the Purl” Scott



Tuesday, September 5 Mont-Saint-Michel and on to Dinan

Today we leave Normandy bound for Brittany. Our first stop will be one of the most iconic places in the world and one of France's most stunning sights, Mont-Saint-Michel whose history dates back to 708 AD. Sitting atop an island, this gravity-defying abbey has been one of Europe's most important pilgrimage destinations for centuries. Here we can see both Romanesque and Gothic styles of architecture. Since 1966, the now UNESCO World Heritage Site has become a renowned center of learning and has attracted some of the greatest minds and manuscript illustrators in Europe.

From here, we will travel into Brittany where our destination for the night is the medieval town of Dinan. Rick Steves says, "If you have time for only one stop in Brittany, the photogenic peninsula in France's far northwest, make it the ancient riverfront city of Dinan." How could we not indulge ourselves here where the main attraction is the town, its people, and its history? Perched above the Rance River, Dinan is arguably one of the loveliest old towns in northern France and is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry. It is known for its half-timbered houses, ancient river port, cobbled streets, arts, peaceful surroundings and the residents' pride in their Breton culture and Celtic music. We think this journey back in time is so special that we are making a special stop here for one night. Our accommodation at Hotel



Arvor was built on the former site of a Jacobin convent. The elegant residence dates back to the 18th century in a Renaissance-style building with an authentic atmosphere. Overnight at Hotel Arvor. (B)

Wednesday, September 6

Dinan, Saint-Malo and Brittany's Pink Granite Coast



This morning we will take some time to explore Dinan's winding streets and stroll along its riverwalk. Dinan has been the home of craftspeople and artists for decades. Artists, engravers, bookbinders, glassblowers to name only a few are found everywhere with countless shops, exhibitions, and studios.

From here we travel to the nearby walled city of Saint-Malo born in one century B.C. with the city founded in the 12th century. Its wealth was built during the 16th – 18th centuries when it was the base for many "official" pirates. We'll explore the old town and walk the ramparts offering amazing views.

From here, it's on to discover the natural beauty of Brittany's *Côte de Granit Rose* (Pink Granite Coast) with its 300-million-year old rocks. This rugged coastline of white sand and turquoise water was carved by the wind and the sea and each coppery pink rock seems to have a poetic shape. This geologic rock is comprised of a mixture of three minerals: feldspar, quartz and mica and is only found in three places on the planet including Brittany, Corsica and China.





Our destination this evening is the seaside town of Trébeurdon, considered one of the highlights of this coast. It enjoys a pretty location with a beach in a natural harbor dotted with the famous pink granite rock formations of the region. Our hotel for the next two nights is Hotel Ti al Lannec (The House of the Moor) located in the perfect setting on the Pink Granite Coast. The charming early 20th century residence is perched on a hill amid wild countryside overlooking the bay with stunning views. Here we enjoy a deep sense of peace and tranquility. It is an idyllic setting for continuing our knitting, weaving or embroidery projects incorporating a divine sense of place in each of them. We'll dine as a group tonight in the hotel's wonderful restaurant with the freshest of ingredients. Overnight at Hotel Ti la Lannec. (B,D)



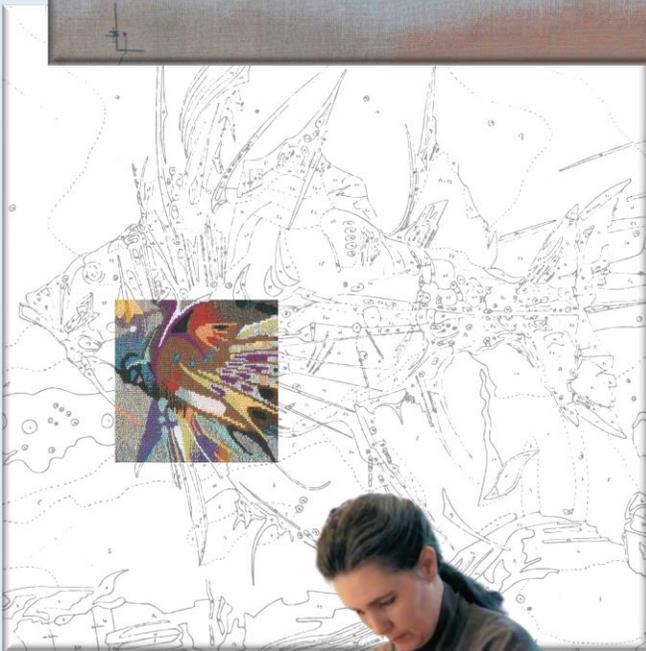
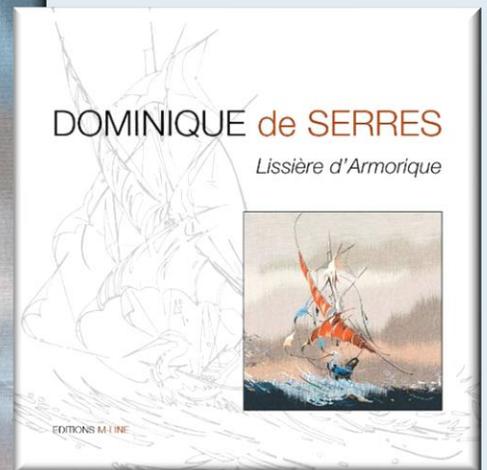
“Knitting is a language that only knitters understand.
You can knit anything into your pattern:
a name, a story, a prayer, or a poem.”

~ Loretta di Napoleoni

Thursday, September 7 Exploring the Pink Granite Coast and Visiting a Local World-Renowned Weaver

Fortunately for us, the town of Trébeurdon is home to a world-renowned weaver, Dominique de Serres. She has been working in the profession of Aubusson bass warp since 1985 and has “chosen to ‘weave time’ as a life commitment.” We begin our day with an exclusive visit with Dominique. Working on a 100-year-old Aubusson loom, Dominique recreates painted images, often of photographs taken by her husband, bringing them to life with woven thread. She employs her own techniques and sensibilities to this ancient art, mixing threads of different colors to create subtle

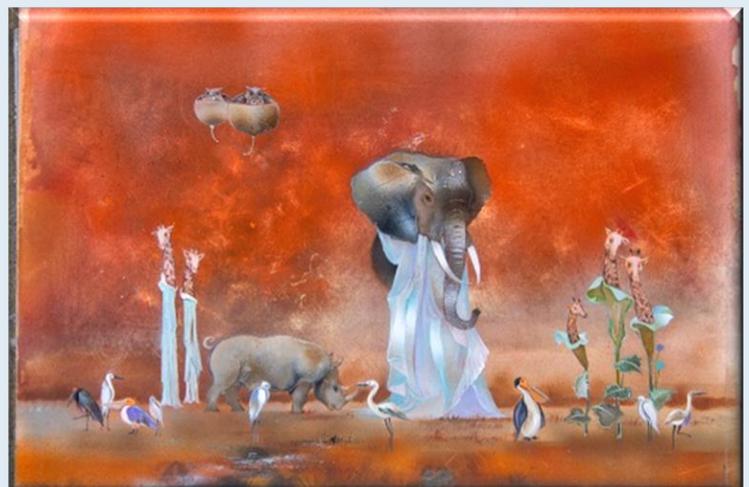
gradations capable of capturing the fleeting light of mysterious landscapes. Her work is a wonder to behold.



In the afternoon, we will continue to explore *le Côte de Granit Rose*. Overnight at Hotel Ti la Lannec. (B)

“Lissière (the old French word for “weaver”), at the dawn of the 21st century, must seem strange to those who are not concerned with the permanence and the transmission of a thousand-year-old knowledge. This trade, so old that it rubs shoulders with the origin of civilizations, is still alive today for a few enthusiasts.”

~ Quoted from Dominique de Serres' website
www.tapisseries-de-serres.com/index.php



Friday, September 8

Exploring the Brittany's Crozon Peninsula



Today we continue our exploration of the splendor of Brittany on a road less traveled. We are heading south to the Finistère region near Quimper. En route we will take a detour to drive along *Presqu'île de Crozon*, the western tip of Brittany and one of Brittany's most scenic areas filled with secluded coves, magnificent panoramas, and crumbling forts. We'll visit the ruins of the Benedictine Abbaye Sainte-Guenole. The museum here holds the records of the history of the settlement founded in 435 and is the oldest Christian site in Brittany.



one of Brittany's most charming villages that has changed little since the mid-18th century. Overnight at Manior de Moëllien. (B,D)

Other stops are the town of Morgat with its colorful houses and several areas of sublime natural beauty such as Cap de la Chevre and Pointe de Dinan with their spectacular panorama views. Pointe de Pen-Hir is a magnificent headland bound by steep cliffs.

Our accommodation for the next two nights is at a 17th century Renaissance granite mansion surrounded by lush forested grounds and featuring an impressive tower. Manior de Moëllien is composed of several buildings filled with lovely antiques and a fine restaurant. We will be within walking distance of Locronan,





Saturday, September 9 Gauguin's Pont Aven and Quimper

We head out for the day to visit two very different and iconic towns in Brittany. We will drive about an hour south to the charming town of Pont Aven. Its beauty captivated the likes of French artists Paul Gauguin and Émile Brenard who set up an artist colony here in 1850's. The beauty of the little village and

surrounding countryside, considered to be some of the most beautiful in all of Brittany, was the muse for many of the famous artworks. The artists chose this area because of the vibrant light and vivid colors. Pont Aven is now home to over 60 galleries to peruse.

Returning north, we find the city of Quimper, considered to be the cultural heart of Brittany. It would be hard to find anywhere in Brittany with more pride in its Breton roots. Its lovely old quarter is a haven of slanted half-timbered houses, narrow cobblestoned lanes, creperies, and its famous pottery. Here we will spend some time strolling through its unique ambiance. A visit to Quimper would not be complete without a stop at the Musée Départemental Breton which is set in the medieval Palais des Evêques de Cornouaille (Palace of the Bishops of Cornwall). Here we learn about the customs and traditions of Brittany. Exhibits include sculpture, furniture, stained glass, and faïence. But the highlight for us may be the four rooms that showcase ceremonial Breton costumes and everyday traditional wear. Here we will see the famous Breton lace headdress (the *C'hoef*) that was immortalized by Gauguin and other artists and one of Brittany's most iconic images. Overnight at Manoir de Moëllien. (B)



Photo credit

© <https://bonjourfrombrittany.wordpress.com/2021/12/11/an-icon-of-brittany/>



Sunday, September 10 Ancient Stone Monuments & Loire Valley

Today we have a very full day. We are headed for the magnificence of the Loire Valley which is about a 3 ½ hour drive. But before we say good-bye to Brittany, we must enjoy one final and historic stop in Carnac. Brittany is believed to have the highest concentration of megalithic sites in the world. These ancient monuments remain shrouded in mystery and folklore. They are older than the written word, but their meaning is still largely unknown or fully understood. Carnac is home to 2,395 monuments dating back to around 4500 BC and is the largest megalithic site in all the world. There are several local legends swirling about these stones. One local myth is that the wizard Merlin turned an entire Roman legion into stone. Others say that the stones were made by the magical *korrigans* (Brittany's little folk). One more story recounts that the patron saint of horned animals, Saint Korneli, was being pursued by a pagan mob and he changed his pursuers into stone. Who knows? We'll spend some time exploring these enigmatic and perplexing sites.

From here, we drive east. You may want to have your knitting or weaving handy for the drive although the scenery is quite impressive. Our destination is near the city of Angers, famous for its 100-meter-long *Tapestry of the Apocalypse*, which we will visit in the coming days.



Our accommodation for the next three nights is at the 18th century Château des Briottieres located at the western end of the Loire Valley. This is not just a hotel, but rather one of the best luxury châteaux in the Loire Valley run by the same family for seven generations. Surrounded by parkland with trees that are several

hundred years old, the beauty of the region and the chateau has been mentioned by many writers and poets over the years. The home is filled with antique period furniture, four poster beds, and charming alcoves for a perfect blend of charm and authenticity. To top it all off, we will dine by candlelight in the 18th century dining room tonight as a group. Overnight at Château des Briottieres. (B,D)

Monday, September 11

Relaxing in the Splendor of our Château



We've traveled a long way and we think some relaxation is warranted. What better place to wind down walking amidst the lush greenery of the 50-hectare park? This morning, you can simply listen to the birds singing and contemplate the tops of the tall trees where the enchanting patterns of the branches mingle with the blue sky. If you're lucky, you may spot deer in the park at dawn



or dusk. You'll be surprised to see squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, and birds of prey. On the horizon, our two horses "Balmoral and Taylor" enjoying the good life. You might also choose to be a bit more active and go cycling, horseback riding or play tennis. Maybe some on-site spa services are more to your liking. The choice is yours in this idyllic paradise.



In the afternoon, we may wander out to one of the nearby extraordinary châteaux all located very nearby. Château du Plessis Bourre with its elegant moat, Château de Montriou, Château de Brissac and Château de Serrant are all wonderful destinations. A visit to Abbey of Solesmes, with its extremely rich artistic and cultural heritage, promises an emotional experience. But if we are lucky, we might be able to attend a service of Gregorian chant performed by the

sixty or so monks that occupy the abbey today. Or perhaps we may choose to do some more local wine tasting. We will keep this day loose and flexible to enjoy *la joie de vivre!*

Overnight at Château des Briottieres. (B)



Tuesday, September 12

The Apocalypse Tapestry, A Miracle of History



Photo credit ©https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse_Tapestry



What a treat we have in store today! Located only about 30 minutes from our hotel, hidden away in the 9th century Château d'Angers, is the absolutely stupendous *Tapestry of the Apocalypse*. Commissioned 1375 by Duke Louis, once 140 meters in length, the surviving 100-meter- long tapestry was made after pestilence and war had decimated millions of people in medieval Europe. It was woven by thirty-five weavers in Paris from 1377 to 1382 and was inspired by the last book of the bible, Revelations.

Its size and scope are hard to comprehend. Because it measures more than two meters in height, the depicted angels and monsters are larger than life size. This is an incredible example of a tapestry woven *sans envers* (without a reverse) which means that the ends of the wool were meticulously tidied up. Thus, we can know what the original colors were like, unfaded by sunlight or time.



...and Tasting the Fines Wines of the Loire Valley



What visit to the Loire Valley would be complete without visiting one of its iconic vineyards? In the afternoon, we'll head south of Angers to the Savennières hills. Here we find Château des Vaults, one of the most prestigious vineyards in the Loire Valley. The site is also a conservation area for rare plants, a bird refuge, and a world heritage site. Even if you aren't a wine drinker, you are sure to be enthralled with the setting on our sublime guided walk through the grounds. This is one of the only women-owned wineries in France.

Bazin de Jessey and her daughter Mrs. Evelyn de Pontbriand are the proprietors. We will enjoy an unforgettable tour of the vineyard with the owners followed by a wine tasting.

"Wine should have the face of its birthplace
and the guts of the man who made it..."

At the bottom of the glass,
I want to find the landscape of where I am."

~ Evelyn de Pontbriand

We'll return to our beautiful chateau in the late afternoon so that we have some time to enjoy our luxurious surroundings. Overnight at Château des Briottieres. (B)



Wednesday, September 13 To Paris for Flights Home or Begin Extension to the Dordogne*

Sadly, the time has come to bid au revoir to the Loire Valley. We travel back to Paris today. Please check with us about the timing of your flights home. It is important that you do not book any flight departing before late afternoon or evening.

***If you are interested in an optional extension to the Dordogne, please let us know. If there is enough interest, we will add on a visit to the Aubusson Tapestry Museum and the castles and cave art of the Dordogne. (B)**

Land Costs Include:

- 10 Nights, double occupancy (all in individually atmospheric accommodation - no large impersonal chain hotels!). Single accommodations available at additional cost (see below)
- Private tours and museum visits
- Fiber arts workshops including all materials (all workshops are optional – you need not participate in all of them)
- Private coach and local expert guide
- Private visits and demonstrations with talented artisans, knitters, weavers, and textile designers
- Meals as described

Land Costs Exclude:

- Any air transportation nor airport transfers
- Meals not designated on the itinerary
- Any item not specifically included in your program including snacks, extra personal beverages & bottled water, etc. other than during designated meals, alcoholic beverages
- Excess baggage fees, laundry, and other items of a personal nature not specifically listed
- Tips for your guide, drivers, hotel porters and other service staff
- Additional insurance of any kind

Cost: \$5,765 USD Per Person Based on Double Occupancy; \$5,615 Per Person for Non-Fiber artist
If you prefer a single room, there is a single supplement of \$1,195**

**Accommodations for this tour charge basically the same rate whether there are one or two people sharing the room. Thus, the Single Supplement is rather costly. Please contact us with any questions.
Single accommodations limited to 7 travelers. Shared accommodations (unless by a couple) limited to 8 travelers.

Save Your Spot!
Please call our office for details or questions!
800.369.3033 (from US Only) ~ 970.728.6743



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Loom Dancer Odysseys

does not believe in large group, bargain, or "ordinary" tours. Instead, we strive to immerse the creative and adventurous traveler into the wondrous world of global fiber arts with quality cultural encounters. Our typical group size is limited to 12-16 participants to allow for a more hands-on, intimate travel experience.

Be a creative traveler, not a tourist.

