



## Le Corbusier

Through France and Switzerland

**12–20 October 2024 (MK 509)**

9 days • £3,870

Lecturer: Dr Richard Plant

A wide survey of works by one of the greatest architects of all time.

From Paris through the east of France and the Swiss Jura to Lyon and Marseille.

Le Corbusier has left later generations of architects a problem. It sometimes seems that whatever design solutions they may dream up, Corb arrived there before. And that is without conscious imitation of the master, though no architect has been more imitated.

His energy, his gimlet intelligence and his ambition would have made him master of whatever profession he had chosen, but the fertility of his artistic genius and joy in creation turned him into one of the greatest architects of all time, and the most influential of the twentieth century.

The exploration of the origins of the look of the modern world is a fascinating aspect of this tour, but it is likely that the dominant impression will be of the sheer beauty of Le Corbusier's buildings. There is far more of subtlety, nuance, sophistication and variety than might be expected of someone often simplistically classed as one of the instigators of International Modernism. He was an individual, not merely a representative of a style or movement. His impact was felt not only through his buildings – which are scattered across four continents – but also through numerous unexecuted projects, voluminous writings, and lecture tours.

This tour concentrates on the rich seam of his works to be quarried in Paris and in an arc out to the east of France, through the Swiss Jura and down through Lyon to Marseille – much of it passing fine natural scenery. It covers a considerable distance, but does give as complete a picture of Le Corbusier's architecture as can be expected in a tour of this duration.

Begin in Paris where Le Corbusier settled when he was thirty and emerged as a central figure in what became the intellectual capital of Europe in the inter-war years. End in Marseille where Le Corbusier finally realised his collectivist vision of the Mediterranean good life.

Some buildings are in private hands and we see them from the outside, others are public and accessible and a few will be entered by special arrangement.



*Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye*

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Paris.** Travel by Eurostar at c. 10.20am from London St Pancras to Paris. Paris is the site of Corb's purest statements and of his first large commissions. Visit Villa la Roche-Jeanneret which now houses the Fondation Le Corbusier, and the Immeuble Molitor (1934) in which Le Corbusier created the top floor apartment for himself. First of two nights in Paris.

**Day 2: Paris.** On the western outskirts, at Poissy, is Le Corbusier's lyrically beautiful Villa Savoye (1929), one of the icons of the 20th century. Back in central Paris see Jean Nouvel's Institut du Monde Arabe, a remarkable building with splendid views of the city. Walk through the Quartier Masséna, home to the Bibliothèque National de France (Dominique Perrault, 1996) and a development that includes the Jardin des Grands-Moulins, created in 2011.

**Day 3: Paris, Besançon.** At the Cité Universitaire, the Pavillon Suisse (hall of residence, 1930) became one of the most influential buildings of International Modernism. The Pavillon Brésilien (1959) attempts an expression of national style while the Atelier Ozenfant (1922, exterior) was the studio-residence of painter-critic and fellow purist. Take the TGV (high speed train) from Paris to Besançon. First of three nights in Besançon.

**Day 4: La Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland).** The son of a watchmaker, Le Corbusier's home town for thirty years was La Chaux-de-Fonds, and here he built his first houses. See exteriors of The Villa Fallet (1908), a commission obtained by Le Corbusier when he was only 18, and the Villas Stotzer and Jacquemet when he was still under the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement and Ruskin. Classicism, rationalism and modern building techniques began to

prevail in the Villas Jeanneret (1912, for his own family, enter by special arrangement) and Schwob (1916, exterior).

**Day 5: Ronchamp, Besançon.** Drive into the countryside to the Benedictine monastery at Ronchamp, whose hill-top chapel, Notre-Dame-du-Haut (1950), resulted in charges of treachery from hard-line modernists but has proved prophetic in embracing organic, sculptural values. Some free time in Besançon, a lovely hill town dominated by a massive citadel.

**Day 6: Arc et Senans, L'Arbresle.** The route turns southwest, with a break at La Saline Royale, the remarkable industrial complex in romantic Neo-Classical style (1775) by Ledoux, one of Le Corbusier's inspirations. His second monastic commission, the hillside Couvent de La Tourette at l'Arbresle, was obtained because his agnosticism was regarded as of less significance than the sacred values of his architecture. Continue south to Lyon. First of two nights in Lyon.

**Day 7: Lyon, Firminy-Vert.** The new town at Firminy-Vert (1956–70) was one of the few pieces of Corbusian town planning actually executed with the master's involvement and the site became the largest ensemble of his buildings outside Chandigarh. Also designed by Corbusier are the Maison de la Culture, with its dramatically canted side wall, the sports stadium, and the Unité d'Habitation. The astonishing church of St Pierre was finally completed in 2007, and there is a revelatory Le Corbusier museum. Free afternoon in Lyon to explore the historic centre or some of Lyon's striking modern buildings (Tony Garnier, Renzo Piano) or the Jean Nouvel opera house.

**Day 8: Marseille.** Travel south by TGV. All his life Corbusier had been concerned with issues of housing, urbanism and community, and the fruits of his thinking are to be found in

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continued

the 'Unité d'Habitation' apartment blocks. The one at Marseille (1945–52), though dogged by opposition and delays, is the most monumental embodiment of these theories. Overnight in Marseille.

**Day 9: Marseille.** Some free time in Marseille or join the lecturer for a walk through the old town. Return home by plane (British Airways), arriving at London Heathrow at c. 7.15pm.

## Lecturer

**Dr Richard Plant.** Architectural historian specialising in the Middle Ages and with a strong interest in the modern. After reading English at Cambridge he obtained an MA in the History of Art and a PhD on English Romanesque and the Holy Roman Empire at the Courtauld. He went on to teach at the Courtauld, as well as at University College and Queen Mary College, London where he taught both medieval and modern architectural history. He was formerly the Deputy Academic Director at Christie's Education. He has published on English and German architecture.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £3,870 or £3,640 without international travel. **Single occupancy:** £4,520 or £4,290 without international travel.

**Included:** rail travel from London to Paris (Standard Premier) on Eurostar and 2 TGV journeys (first class) within France; flight Marseille to London with British Airways (aircraft: Airbus 319); travel by private coach for other journeys; hotel accommodation as specified below; breakfasts and 6 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Accommodation. Hotel Édouard 7, Paris** (hoteledouard7-paris.com): comfortable 4-star hotel, five minutes on foot from the Opéra Garnier. **Hotel de Paris, Besançon** (besanconhoteldeparis.com): 3-star hotel in the historic centre. **Hotel Carlton, Lyon** (accorhotels.com): boutique 4-star hotel, well-situated on the Presqu'île. **Hotel la Résidence du Vieux-Port, Marseille** (hotel-residence-marseille.com): 4-star hotel in a 1950s building overlooking the harbour. Bright, modernist décor. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** This is a tiring tour with a lot of travel and several hotel changes. There is also quite a lot of walking within the cities visited. For the train journeys you will need to be able to carry your luggage on and off the train and within the stations. Average distance by coach per day: 38 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.