Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Francis arrives in St. Peter's Square for his weekly general audience Wednesday, June 28, 2023. The Vatican says Francis will make a two-day trip to Marseille, France, in late September. The announcement on Saturday, July 29, 2023 adds more travel to a flurry of trips the 86-year-old pontiff will be making in the coming weeks. (AP Photo/Andrew Medichini, File)

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Rome — July 31, 2023

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Pope Francis will make a two-day trip to Marseille, France, in late September, adding to a flurry of trips the 86-year-old pontiff will soon be making only weeks after leaving hospital following abdominal surgery.

Early this year, Francis had said that he would go to the port city to participate in a meeting of Mediterranean-area Catholic bishops, but until the Vatican released his schedule on July 29 for the Sept. 22-23 pilgrimage, it wasn't clear how long he would stay.

On his second day in Marseille, Francis will meet with the bishops and in late afternoon preside at Mass in the city's soccer stadium.

Francis heads on Aug. 2 to Lisbon, Portugal, on a five-day trip centered around a Catholic youth jamboree. While in Portugal, he'll make a helicopter trip to Fatima, site of a popular shrine to the Virgin Mary.

Then on Aug. 31, he is scheduled to fly to Mongolia for the first-ever visit by a pontiff to that Asian country, which has a tiny Catholic community.

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Three trips in a span of two months will test how well Francis has rebounded from abdominal surgery in June to repair a hernia and remove painful scarring from previous surgeries. In 2021, Francis underwent surgery in Rome to receive a section of his bowel that had narrowed. Earlier this year, Francis was hospitalized to receive antibiotics intravenously to treat bronchitis.

His pilgrimage to Marseille begins in the afternoon on Sept. 22. Upon arrival at Marseille's airport, Francis will be officially welcomed by French President Emmanuel Macron, according to the official Vatican schedule.

Francis and diocesan clergy will have a prayer service in the city's Notre Dame de la Garde basilica. Early that evening, the pope will preside at what the Vatican calls a “moment of reflection with religious leaders” near a memorial dedicated to sailors and migrants lost at sea.

During his papacy, Francis has repeatedly decried the loss of migrants' lives in the Mediterranean while attempting to cross the sea in smugglers' unseaworthy vessels launched from the shores of northern Africa.

On his final day in Marseille, the pope's schedule begins at the archbishop's residence with a private meeting with people struggling with economic problems. Before heading to the stadium for Mass, Francis will meet with Macron for talks, an exchange of gifts and an official photo opportunity, the Vatican said.

This story appears in the **Pope Francis in Marseille** feature series. View the full series.