



*Vineyard walks*

## Hikes along the Loire

### UNESCO'S Loire from Tours to Saumur

#### Tour Highlights

- ☞ Explore the finest section of France's largest river.
- ☞ 3-star standard accommodation throughout
- ☞ Visit four chateaux, the 16th Century gardens of Villandry, the Abbey at Fontevraud [resting place of Richard the Lion Heart] and Tours, the region's most important city.
- ☞ Hike two tributaries of the Loire and marvel at their troglodyte dwellings
- ☞ Immerse yourself in the 'Garden of France' and a renowned wine-growing region - let us be your guide!

#### Fact File

- ✓ 6-night, self-guided, inn-to-inn walking tour, with optional seventh to take in a fifth castle.
- ✓ Graded as a light challenge, averaging 10 miles/ 16 kms a day.
- ✓ Convenient access by train from Paris in approx. 2 hrs.
- ✓ Tour starts in Tours and finishes in Saumur.
- ✓ Start any day from 15th April to 15th October.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout, plus two morning transfers to shorten the day's walking.



#### Theme



**Hikes along the Loire** is a short walking tour that introduces you to the essence of the life and times of UNESCO's world heritage central Loire Valley. You delight in five days of gentle walking, along a variety of trails that comprise the region's quintessential hiking route, the GR3.

**Hikes along the Loire** starts in Tours, the capital of the department of Indre-et-Loire, considered the home of 'neutral' French pronunciation. It boasts a fine Musée des Beaux-Arts and one of the best river-side guinguettes in France - get there early for either lunch or dinner.



*The magnificent chateau and gardens of Villandry*

From the aptly-named 'Tours', you then stride out along the river to Villandry, with its impressive Renaissance chateau and unique 16th century gardens. Next in line is Azay-le-Rideau, with its picture-postcard village, chateau and gardens. The walk onto Chinon is a sheer delight, as too the Chateau-Fort lying majestically above the right bank of the river Vienne.

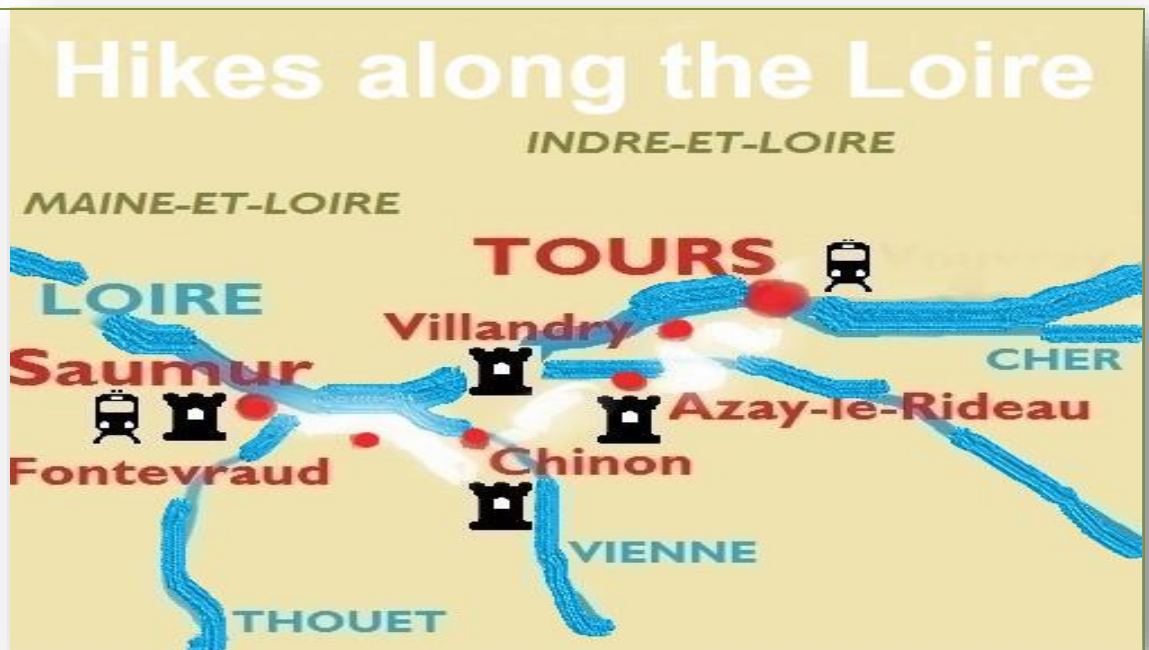
Next we head in-land and visit Europe's largest monastic complex, Fontevraud-l'Abbaye, burial place of Richard the Lion Heart. Then re-join the Loire, pass the Château de Montsoreau (built in the Loire's riverbed) before striding out through troglodyte country to Saumur. Its flamboyant chateau-fort is a real bijou.

You stay in the best three-star hotels along the way, where you can enjoy some of France's finest wines from the AOCs of Touraine and Saumur - Chinon, Cheverny, Vouvray and the distinctive dry rosés of The Loire. Our tour dossier, with its comprehensive coverage of the region's appellations, will help you make that informed choice as to how best to complement your evening meal.

Finally, the important issues of easy access and departure are conveniently catered for by the much-heralded and reliable SNCF.

**Hikes along the Loire** is a perfect, stand-alone introduction to the life and times of France's legendary river valley; or the ideal addition to our Taste of Loire hiking trip that whetted your appetite last time around.





## Hikes along the Loire: Six-night tour itinerary

[All distances, times and elevation figures are approximate] <sup>1</sup>

### Day 1 Arrive in Tours by train.

Early arrival recommended so as there's plenty to see: old quarter, cathedral, basilica, Musée de Beaux Arts - and we'll even recommend the best place for lunch/dinner.

Night in central Tours.

### Day 2 Tours to Villandry. [12 miles-19½ kms, approx. 4 hrs]

You walk beside the Petit Cher and the Cher on route to Savonnières, where the traditional flat-bottomed river boats abound. Then climb the 100 steps [we make it 110] to a fine ridge and passageway to the ancient village of Villandry, with its magnificent castle and ornate 16th century gardens.

Night in Villandry.



### Day 3 Villandry to Azay-le-Rideau. [8½ miles-13½ kms, approx. 3½ hrs walking].

An easy-going half day's walk through the Vallée du Vau to Menhir Pierre aux Joncs, on route to the quaint village of Azay with its Renaissance chateau lapped by the waters of the river Indre.

Night in Azay-le-Rideau.

### Day 4 Azay to Chinon. [7½ miles-12 kms, approx. 3 hrs walking].

A short transfer after breakfast gets you to the start of the Route forestière de Rabelais followed by the Allée Louis XI. The ledge walk from the outskirts of Chinon is worth savouring, which drops you conveniently at the front gates of Chinon's magnificent medieval castle overlooking La Vienne river. This bijou village is also blessed with its fine red wine.

Night in Chinon

**Day 5 Chinon to Fontevraud-l'Abbaye** [8 miles/12½ kms, approx. 4½ hrs]

Hug the river Vienne for the first half of the trail to La Chaussee. Then kick out across the Vallee des Veaux and through the Fontevraud forest. Enter Maine-et-Loire, pass the Chapelle de Notre Dame de Pitie before arriving in sacré Fontevraud, resting place of two Plantagenet kings and queens of England, including Richard The Lionheart. Both Abbey and hotel are a treat.

Night in Fontevraud

**Day 6 Fontevraud-l'Abbaye to Saumur** [12 miles-19½ kms, approx. 4½ to 5 hrs]

A short transfer after breakfast takes you to a fine belvedere at the confluence of the Loire and Vienne rivers. You pass the Chateau de Montsoreau [made famous by Alexandre Dumas] and can visit a troglodyte wine estate before striding out across AOC Saumur-Champigny country. Plenty of fine belvederes await along the balcony route to Saumur, with its 'chateau d'amour' perched on a tuffeau slope.

Note: option to split this last day in two so you can have time to visit Montsoreau chateau - please ask for details.

**Day 7 End of Hikes along the Loire tour.**

Breakfast followed by check out and onward journey by train. Bonne continuation and we hope to see you next year.

*Chateau-fort at Chinon*





*Troglodyte café*

## What's Included

- ✓ 6 nights' accommodation in 3-star standard accommodation, incl. taxes.
- ✓ 6 breakfasts and 3 evening meals.
- ✓ Hiking Insight Notes that empower & make orientation easy plus 1: 50,000 maps. The paths are very well way marked and we consider this scale map as entirely adequate for this uncomplicated trail.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout plus two morning people transfers<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Comprehensive and themed dossier, featuring the chateaux, gardens and wines of La Loire.
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 Native English support from 8 'till late.

## Not included

- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch options are listed in your walking notes, while conveniently-located dinner options abound.
- ⊗ 1: 25,000 scale maps: six of these would be required to cover the tour, which we are happy to supply at a supplement. Please enquire.
- ⊗ Personal expenses
- ⊗ Entrances into any optional cultural visits and venues, incl. the chateaux, Abbey and any wine-related visits.#
- ⊗ Hiking, personal and travel insurances
- ⊗ Single rooms - unless booked at the single-person rate
- ⊗ Travel to and from the tour start and finish points.







*La place du Fontevraud*

## Superior hotels

*“Carefully-selected accommodation based on knowing our partners well.”*

We have visited and/or stayed in all the accommodation along the trail in order to select and offer you the best accommodation that this Loire holiday can offer at every step of the way.

Your **superior hotel accommodation** allows you to experience the trail by day whilst focussing the evenings on you, your family or friends. You set the social agenda in the welcoming environment of your hotel bar, restaurant or room.

Hotels are on the trail, their standard is 3-star and they offer high levels of comfort indeed. You start off in Tours staying in a sumptuous chambre d’hotes du charme in the heart of the city centre.



This is a very popular tourist area, attracting visitors from all over the world and throughout the season. Early booking is thus advised.

## Access & Departure

### How to get to Tours

#### Arrival:

- By rail: from Paris in approx. 2 hours.

### How to leave Saumur

- By rail: to Paris in approx. 2½ hours.

Please also see: <https://www.sncf.com/en>  
or <https://www.rome2rio.com/>





*Chateau de Montsoreau*

## Ten reasons to book with The Enlightened Traveller®

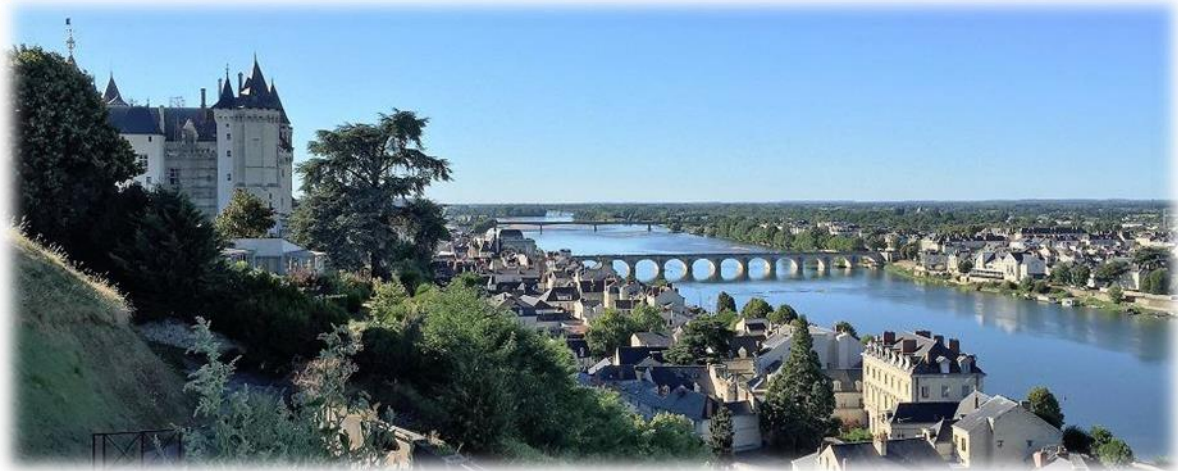


- ❶ Best accommodation, better service and recommended by The Times
- ❷ Benefit from French-based expertise and our total focus on France
- ❸ Buy direct from us, the tour provider, and get great value for money
- ❹ Personalise your tour to suit your own requirements
- ❺ Industry-leading walking notes make orientation easy - we've never lost anyone in fourteen years!
- ❻ 1:50 000 scale maps & a comprehensive and insightful dossier whets your appetite for what's to follow
- ❼ 7/7 telephone support in native English and from 8 till late
- ❽ We transport your luggage from hotel to hotel - you are 'enlightened' in more ways than one!
- ❾ Peace of mind: your money is safe when booking with us - all passengers are fully insured for the initial deposit and balance, irrespective of the means of payment, in the unlikely event of insolvency.
- ❿ Anglo-French family business that tries harder: Brexit means business as usual!

*Chateau-fort at Chinon*







*The big finish in Saumur*

## 2024 prices:

**Per person rate in double or twin-bedded room:**

## Hikes along the Loire

£1055.00 Pounds Sterling or €1285.00 Euros

- **Extra nights: On Request**
- **Want to split the last day's walking and visit another chateau? Ask us for details.**

## Booking

Email, phone or Skype us and we will email you everything you need to reserve your tour. And we are available to LiveChat on our website!

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We reserve the right to alter parts of the above programme for the benefit of safety and the quality of the overall experience.

<sup>2</sup> This covers one piece of luggage per person up to 20 kgs in weight. Supplements apply for overweight luggage and we accept no responsibility for lost valuables. We advise you not to bring computers and business-related equipment.

# Tour prices do not include entrance fees to chateaux, Gardens or other cultural visits

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## Peace of Mind

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Enlightened Traveller® are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Enlightened Traveller®.

Consumer aware: This insurance is only valid for passengers who book with and pay directly to The Enlightened Traveller® and not via intermediaries. Please see our website for full details.

