



Chateau Chenonceau

Loire Chateaux Walks

The Best of UNESCO'S Loire with complementary accommodation

Tour Highlights

- ☞ Explore the jewels of the finest section of France's largest river.
- ☞ A 3-star hotel comfort tour
- ☞ Visit eight chateaux, the magical 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 three 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

- ✓ 10-night, self-guided, inn-to-inn walking tour across three departments of the central Loire Valley.
- ✓ Graded as a light challenge, averaging 10 miles/ 16 kms a day over a total of 100 miles/160 kms.
- ✓ Convenient access by train from Paris in approx. 2 hrs.
- ✓ Tour starts in Blois and finishes in Saumur. You start any day from 15th April to 4th October.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout, plus five morning transfers to shorten the day's walking.



Theme

Loire Chateaux Walks is the perfect mix of light walking and cultural immersion in UNESCO's world heritage central Loire Valley. You will enjoy ten days of gentle walking, along a varied mix of trails, that facilitates your experiencing at first hand the many splendours of life along the most-blessed section of France's longest river.



Loire Chateaux Walks starts in Blois, with its fine Renaissance Chateau, home to King Louis XII and where Joan of Arc once resided. Twelve days later you bid au revoir to La Loire in splendid Saumur, 100 miles to the west, with its imposing medieval castle or 'chateau fort' originally constructed in the 10th century by Theobald I, Count of Blois.



The magnificent chateau and gardens of Villandry

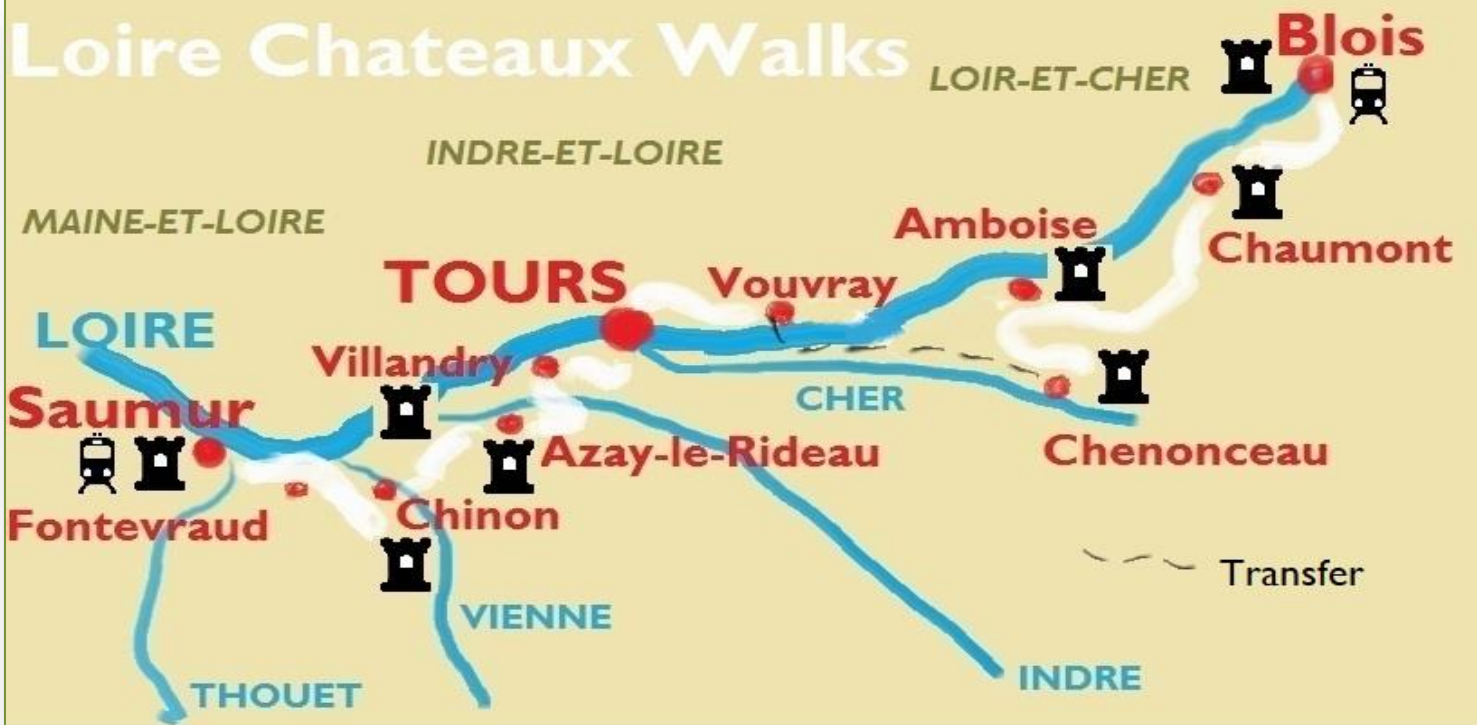
In between, you have the opportunity to... visit numerous chateaux [Renaissance and Medieval - see map below] as well as Europe's largest monastic complex, burial place of none other than Richard the Lion Heart; appreciate the visual splendour of Villandry's renowned and unique 16th century gardens; feast on some of the region's distinctive troglodyte dwellings carved out of the local 'Tuffeau' limestone; hike three other tributaries of La Loire and spend a half-day exploring its largest city, Tours, where the French pronunciation is considered neutral and the wine superlative.

The aim of this tour is two-fold: half-day fun walks that enable you to visit the castles and other manifestations of cultural heritage at a leisurely pace - rather than 'full day walks plus rushed visits before closing time'. The castles are state managed so, in the land of the 35-hour-week, don't expect them to be open before 9am or after 6.30 pm! In a sense, the walking is functional - a means to getting you into position for the day's main activity and, to that effect, we include five short morning transfers to help you on your way.

Finally, it would be amiss not to discuss our Central Loire Valley tour without referencing some of France's finest wines: you get to appreciate the wines from the AOCs of Touraine and Saumur - Chinon, Cheverny, Vouvray and the Rosés de Loire, so distinctive from the bland and over-acidic Loire offerings that find their way onto the shelves of world's supermarkets and wine stores. And whilst responsible walking means wine drinking is not to be encouraged during the day, our tour dossier provides you with ample insight on the region's appellations that will enable you to make an informed choice as to what will best complement your evening meals. Furthermore, where chateaux are absent such as in Tours, opportunities to improve your oenological profile are normally available. See tour dossier for details!

Loire Chateaux Walks facilitates a unique experience that few others get to enjoy - i.e., without the hindrance of driving or cycling. Forget the inflated parking fees and congestion, or the concerns over bike theft, punctures and oil stains, and take complete control of your Loire Chateaux experience. You know it makes sense.

Loire Chateaux Walks



Loire Chateaux Walks: ten-night tour itinerary

[All distances, times and elevation figures are approximate] ¹

Day 1 Arrive in Blois by train.

Early arrival recommended so as to maximize time in the Chateau Royal and enjoy a walk around the adjacent gardens - followed by a saunter around town and your first look at The Loire river.

Night in Blois.

Day 2 Blois to Chaumont-sur-Loire.

[10½ miles-17 kms, 4½ hrs].

You are collected from your hotel and transferred a short distance out of town for your first hike along The GR3 as it wends its way along the left bank of the Loire to Chaumont via the Beuvron tributary - not to mention your first experience of Loire Valley wood-walking.

Night in Chaumont.

Day 3 Chaumont to Amboise.

[10½ miles-17 kms, 4½ hrs].

A short transfer out of town and we climb to the giddy heights of 112 ms and enter the department of Indre-et-Loire before descending to l'Amasse, a small Loire tributary at Souvigny. Then its a mix of copse, wood and lost hamlets before arrival in Amboise. As well as the Chateau Royal and the Chapelle St Hubert, you can visit Le Clos Lucé - home of Leonardo da Vinci.

Night in Amboise.





The Loire at Chinon

Day 4 Amboise to Chenonceau.
[8 miles-13 kms, 4 hours]

A charming, bucolic hike through the Amboise forest en route to arguably the quaintest chateau and gardens of the whole week - with access secured via walking a series of the symmetrical allées, so common in these walking-oriented parts.

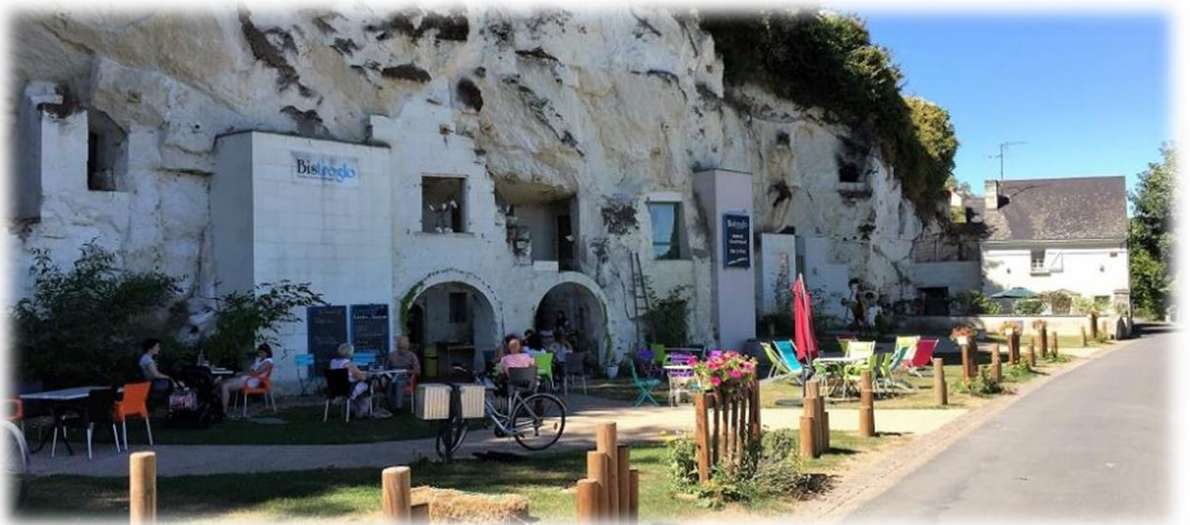
Night in Chenonceau.



Day 5 Vouvray to Tours.
[7 miles-11 kms, 3 hrs]

You are transferred from Chenonceau to Vouvray after breakfast. A picturesque morning's walk is followed by a memorable tour of...Tours, capital of La Touraine and important staging post along the Paris-to-Compostella pilgrimage route. There's plenty to see [old quarter, cathedral, basilica, Musée de Beaux Arts] and we'll even recommend the best place for lunch. Then see the rest of the highlights before retiring to your comfortable hotel, conveniently-placed for dinner and your onward journey tomorrow.

Night in Tours.



A troglodyte cafe

Day 6 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 7 Villandry to Azay-le-Rideau.
[8½ miles-13½ kms, approx. 3½ hrs walking].

An easy-going half day's walk through the Vallee 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.

Local wine estate



Day 8 Azay to Chinon.
[7½ miles-12 kms, approx. 3 hrs walking].

A short transfer after breakfast gets you to the start of the Route forestiere de Rabelais followed by the Allee 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

Chateau de Chaumont



Day 9 **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 10 **Fontevraud-l'Abbaye to Saumur**
[13 miles-21 kms, approx. 6 hrs]

A short transfer after breakfast takes you to the confluence of the Loire and Vienne rivers. You can visit the Chateau de Montsoreau [made famous by Alexandre Dumas] and 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.

Night in Saumur - please ask us about the best option for your over-night stay in Saumur, especially relevant if you have an early train.

Day 11 **End of Loire Chateaux Walks tour.** Breakfast followed by check out and onward journey by train. Bonne continuation and we hope to see you next year.



Vineyard walks

What's Included

- ✓ 10 nights in comfort, featuring 3-star hotels, one 4-star¹ and one chambre d'hotes du charme²
- ✓ 10 breakfasts and 6 evening meals
- ✓ Hiking Insight Notes that empower & make orientation easy plus 1: 50,000 maps. The trail is very well way marked.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout plus five morning people transfers
- ✓ Comprehensive and themed dossier, featuring the chateaux and wines of La Loire.
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 Native English support from 8 'till late.

¹ We book standard rooms in all the hotels. Where the 4-star hotel is fully booked, you will be given the option to either pay for an upgrade or opt for the nearby 2-star hotel at a reduced rate.

² Where the chambre d'hotes du charme is unavailable, you will be placed in a 3-star hotel.

Not included

- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch options are listed in your walking notes.
- ⊗ 1: 25,000 scale maps: ten of these would be required to cover the tour, which we are happy to supply at a supplement. Please enquire. The trail is well waymarked.
- ⊗ 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



Comfortable and well-located hotels with en-suite rooms

“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.

3-star hotels plus one 4-star hotel and a charming period guest house in Tours centre. Six dinners are also included.

All hotels are on the trail and offer high levels of comfort indeed. Bedrooms are all en suite.

We book standard rooms throughout, but Upgrades are available on request. If the 4-star hotel is fully booked, you will be given the option to either pay for an upgrade or opt for the nearby and recently-refurbished 2-star hotel at a reduced rate.



The guest house does not offer dinner, but there are plenty of options from which to choose and your hosts will be able to advise. The same is the case where the hotel does not have a restaurant.

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 Blois

Arrival:

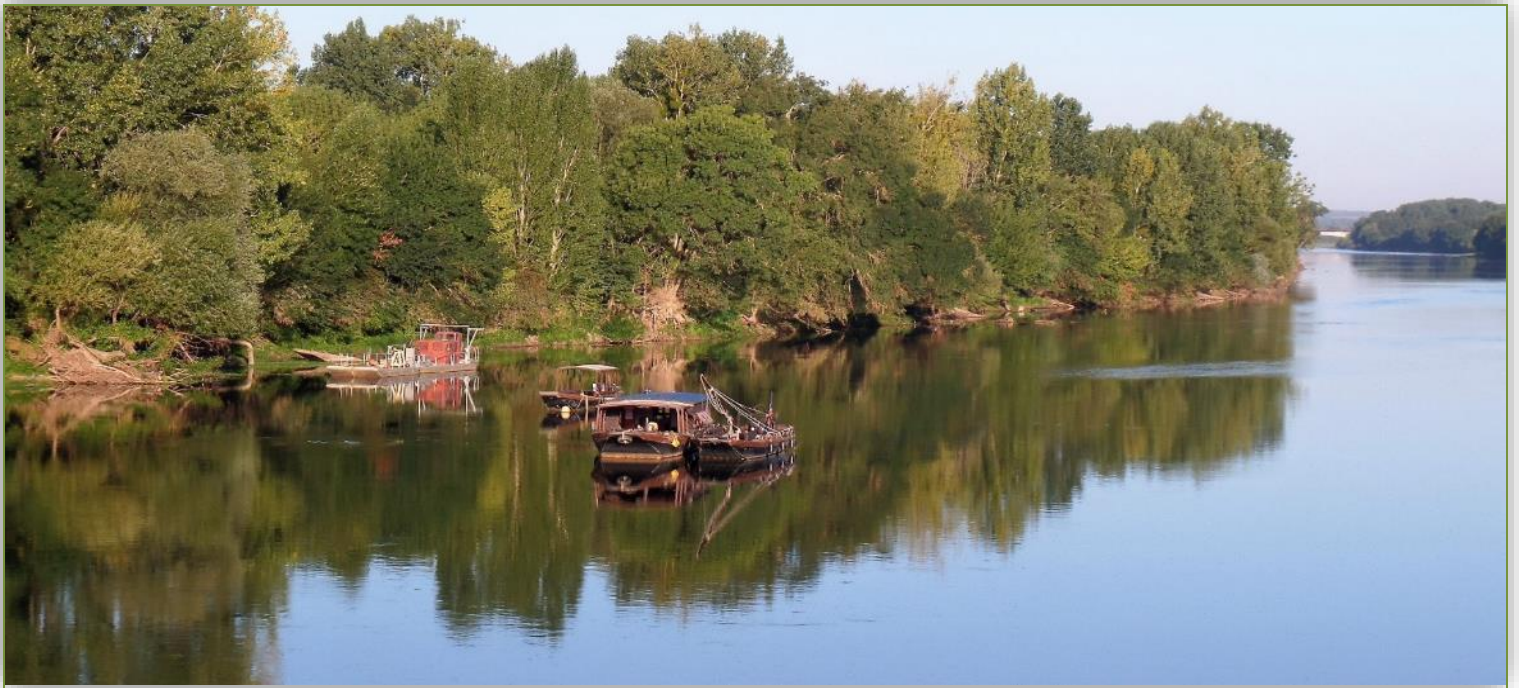
- By rail: from Paris in approx. 2 hours.

How to leave Saumur

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

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





Traditional Loire craft

Ten reasons to book with The Enlightened Traveller®



- ❶ Best accommodation, better service
- 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 - and add extra nights
- ❺ Industry-leading walking notes make orientation easy - we've never lost anyone yet!
- 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 8
- ❽ We transport your luggage from hotel to hotel² - 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!



How the French 'other half' live



The Loire at Amboise

2024 prices:

Per person rate in double or twin-bedded room:

Loire Chateaux Walks - 10-night trip

£1670.00 Pounds Sterling or €1995.00 Euros#

- Extra nights: On request
- Want to split the last day's walking and visit another chateau at Montsoreau? 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

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

² 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 and to use lockable cases.

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

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.

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The Enlightened Traveller®

Walking Holidays in France Ltd.

12 Park Lane

Tilehurst, READING

RG31 5DL, England

UK: (0800) 4488 404

France: 06 95 04 12 63

Email: info@walking-holidays-france.com

Inter: <https://walking-holidays-france.com>

Skype: [theenlightenedtraveller](https://www.skype.com/en/contacts/theenlightenedtraveller)

Facebook.com/TheEnlightenedTraveller

Instagram.com/the.enlightened.traveller

