



*Chateau-fort at
Chinon*

Walking Loire Valley

“Moderate challenge, Superlative experience!”

Tour Highlights

- ☞ Explore the finest section of France’s largest river.
- ☞ 7-night format.
- ☞ Visit Medieval and Renaissance chateaux and gardens, troglodyte buildings and Fontevraud Abbey [resting place of Richard the Lion Heart].
- ☞ Immerse yourself in the ‘Garden of France’: hike the Loire and its tributaries, with riverside promenades and ledges, through woodland and forest, across open countryside and alongside vineyards.

Fact File

- ✓ Self-guided, inn-to-inn walking tour across three departments of UNESCO’s central Loire Valley.
- ✓ Graded as a moderate challenge, averaging 10 miles/16 kms a day.
- ✓ Tour starts in Amboise and finishes in Saumur. Convenient access by train from/to Paris in approx. 2 hrs.
- ✓ Start any day from 15th April to 4th October.
- ✓ Luggage transfers throughout, plus two morning transfers.



Theme



Walking Loire Valley is a fine walking trip along UNESCO’s world heritage ‘central Loire Valley’. It poses a moderate level of challenge as a result of distances traversed rather than any appreciable ascents or descents. There are two tour formats so take your choice based on your preference and the time available to you: a 10 or a 7-night version, where you will average 10 miles/16 kms walking per day. Whichever you opt for, you will enjoy a variety of trail, including riverside promenade and ledge, wood and forest, open countryside and, of course, vineyard walks through The Loire’s finest wine-growing areas.

Walking Loire Valley [seven-nighter] starts in Amboise and finishes in Saumur, both blessed with their own Chateau and, more latterly, a Gare SNCF to facilitate your arrival and departure. Sandwiched between these two railroad 'book-ends' is the book itself: the one you write. You walk for the best part of each day and then enjoy a series of cultural highs that most of Le Midi can only envy: numerous Renaissance and Medieval chateaux in an impeccable state of repair; troglodyte buildings and dwellings incorporated into the local architecture in the shape of hotels and guest house rooms, garages and even restaurants and snack bars; magnificent ornamental gardens that leave even the most horticulturally-challenged green-fingered; Europe's largest monastic complex and final resting place of The Plantagenets; and, last but not least, an array of light, viticultural delicacies that embarrass Parker's over-emphasis on high-alcohol taste bombs - enjoy a well-earned drink with your evening meal AND get up early and walk to the next watering hole that is sure to boast equally fine-but-light wines.

Complementing this fine array of cultural heritage is an excellent range of mainly 3-star hotels, supplemented by one carefully-selected 2-star inn and one fine chambres d'hotes du charme.

Walking Loire Valley promotes your own perfect balance between enjoying a good day's walking and participation in the multifarious cultural opportunities that exist along this section of France's longest river - all of which are documented in your comprehensive tour dossier. Tailor your walking holiday to your own unique interests in the knowledge that your hotels provide you with the early breakfast you need in order to maximise your opportunities for the day ahead.

The magnificent chateau and gardens of Villandry





Walking Loire Valley: tour itinerary

[All distances and times are approximate] ¹

Day 1 Arrive in Amboise by train.

Early arrival recommended so as to maximize time in the Chateau Royal, at the home of Leonard da Vinci, and enjoy a walk around town and take your first look at The Loire river.

Night in Amboise.



Day 2 Amboise to Vouvray. [12½ miles-20 kms, 6 hrs]

No chateaux on today's agenda, so you enjoy a full day's walking and discover the terroir of the chenin blanc grape [aka le Pineau de la Loire], cross the Loire River via a footpath alongside railway lines, and hopefully enter Vouvray in time to either visit a wine museum or enjoy a 30-minute tour of the local wine co-operative in English - subject to your arrival and local opening times - please state your interest at time of booking, as it is relevant to which accommodation we place you in. Interested in a troglodyte room subject to availability? Let us know when booking.

Night in Vouvray.



Day 3 Vouvray to Villandry. [12 miles-19½ kms, approx. 4 hrs]

After-breakfast transfer takes you to Tours, capital of Touraine, where you can visit the Cathedral and the Musée des Beaux Artes. Then grab your packed lunch, jump onto the cross-city tramway, and reconnect with the trail at the southern edge of the City. You walk beside the Petit Cher and the Cher on route to Savonnières, where the traditional flat-bottomed river boats abound. Climb the 100 steps to a fine passageway to the ancient village of Villandry, with its magnificent castle and ornate 16th century gardens. Enjoy it now or tomorrow morning.

Night in Villandry.



A troglodyte cafe



Day 4 Villandry to Azay-le-Rideau.
[8½ miles-13½ kms, approx. 3½ hrs walking].

Get to the nearby gates of Villandry castle and its ornate 16th century gardens by 9am and you'll have it to yourselves. Then it's a relatively easy-going half day's walk through the Vallee du Vau on route to the quaint village of Azay with its Renaissance chateau lapped by the waters of the river Indre. The village is very picturesque, too.

Night in Azay-le-Rideau.

Day 5 Azay to Chinon. [7½ miles-12 kms, approx. 3 hrs walking]

Morning transfer to Saint-Benoit-la-Forêt and enter the Forest of Chinon with its emblematic 'allées'. 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 blessed with so much to appreciate, including some fine red wine.

Night in Chinon

Day 6 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 Chaussée. Then kick out across the Vallée des Veaux and through the Fontevraud forest. Enter Maine-et-Loire, pass the Chapelle de Notre Dame de Pitié 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



Local wine estate

Day 7 Fontevraud-l'Abbaye to Saumur [12 miles-19 kms, 5 hrs]

The day starts with a short transfer to Candes-Saint-Martin, where a splendid ruin of a mill awaits at a fine belvedere over the confluence of the Loire and Vienne rivers. Then walk a balcony trail to Turquant 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 8 End of Walking Loire Valley tour.

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



Vineyard walks

What's Included

- ✓ 7 nights' in carefully-selected and excellent accommodation.
- ✓ 7 breakfasts and 3 evening meals - in locations with no choices. Options abound elsewhere.
- ✓ 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 three morning people transfers²
- ✓ Comprehensive and themed dossier, featuring the chateaux, gardens and wines of La Loire.
- ✓ Telephone help-line service with 7/7 and 8 'till late Native English support.

What's not included

- ⊗ Remaining meals and all drinks and extras - lunch and dinner options are listed in your dossier and 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.
- ⊗ 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

Mainly three- star 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 three and two-star hotels that this Loire holiday can offer at every step of the way. That’s five 3-star hotels, one 2-star hotel and one of the best chambres d’hotes du charme in the Valley.

Walking Loire Valley 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.

Accommodation is on the trail and offers high levels of comfort with all mod cons. Vouvray does not have a hotel, so you will automatically stay in our preferred chambre d’hotes du charme.

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

How to get to Amboise

Arrival:

- By rail: from Paris in approx. 2 hours.
- By rail: from Lyon in approx. 4 to 5 hours.

How to leave Saumur

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

See <https://loco2.com/> for planning.



Traditional Loire craft

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 eleven 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

2024 prices:

Per person rate in double or twin-bedded room:

Walking Loire Valley [7-night tour]

£1095.00 Pounds Sterling or €1335.00 Euros

- **Extra nights: On Request**

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.

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

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

Internet: <http://walking-holidays-france.com>

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

Facebook.com/TheEnlightenedTraveller

Instagram.com/the.enlightened.traveller

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