



Romantic Châteaux of the Western Loire Valley Partner Tour

Tour Overview

How This Tour Differs from Our Other Loire Valley Châteaux Itineraries: This tour has been produced in conjunction with a number of French service providers and, unlike our other tour itineraries, it includes lodging, breakfast daily, and 2 dinners. This 4-day / 5-night itinerary features 5 different overnight destinations and the opportunity to visit at least 5 major castles. This tour also includes an opportunity to canoe the Loire and Cher Rivers. Major châteaux on this itinerary include Villandry, Azay-le-Rideau, Chinon, Ussé, and Langeais.

Tour Dates: You may begin this tour on any day from April 1 to October 25. See Schedule for blackout dates and additional tour scheduling considerations.

Location: Loire Valley region of France known as the "Garden of France." The region has been on the UNESCO's World Heritage list since 2000, owing to its culture and art, concentrated largely in the region's châteaux (castles). The Loire Valley, is just 1 - 2 hours from Paris. Overnight destinations on this tour include Tours, Villandry, Azay-le-Rideau, Chinon, and Langeais.

Tour Type: Circuit tour

Terrain: Flat for the most part with occasional hills. Cycling is primarily on designated bike routes, which may be separate paths or tiny roads shared with local residents.

Length: 4 days / 5 nights

Distance: Total: 126 km / 78 miles. Average per day: 31.5 km / 19.5 miles.

Highlights:

- **Historic royal cities** of Tours and Chinon.
- **Some of the grandest** of the Loire Valley castles, including the castles of Villandry, Azay-le-Rideau, Ussé, Chinon, and Langeais.
- **Countless** smaller castles.
- **Tranquil cycling** on bike paths and tiny, quiet roads.
- **Easy cycling** along the banks of the region's lovely rivers: the Loire, the Cher, and the Vienne.
- **The opportunity to canoe** the Loire and Cher rivers for a unique perspective of paradise. (Ability to swim required.)
- **Beautiful** countryside and charming medieval villages.
- **Vineyards** and lots of opportunities for wine tastings.

Pricing Details

Note: All prices are US dollars.

Per Person Adult Price: \$1,245.00

Per Person Child Price (16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults): \$935.00

Group discounts are not available for this tour.

The tour price includes:

- Lodging in 2-star hotels, 3-star hotels, and B&Bs, in a double room, including taxes
- 5 Breakfasts & 2 dinners
- Welcome and Orientation by a Diverse Directions representative
- Tour Documentation: Route instructions, maps, Pre-trip Preparation Guide, On-Road Quick Reference Guide, and Sights Guide
- Bike Rental for 5 Days: Excellent quality **hybrid or mountain bike** with map carrier, cyclometer, water bottle cage, rear rack, rear pannier, lock, repair kit, helmet, and on-road bike assistance. Optional pedal cages. Tandem bikes are also available.
- Rental of 2- to 3-person canoe equipped with life jackets, paddles, airtight drums, and maps
- Shuttle to the canoe departure point and the transfer of your bikes from Villandry to Bréhémont.
- Daily Baggage Transfers
- English-Speaking Support Staff
- Shipping and Handling Charges for US customers

The tour price does NOT include:

- Lunches & 3 dinners
- Transportation from your home to Tours and from Langeais to your home
- Personal expenses
- Insurance
- Shipping and Handling Charges for non-US customers. A shipping & handling charge of US \$15.00 will be added to tour package orders outside the US.

**** Please note: The ability to swim is required for taking the canoe option. ****

For Diverse Directions' payment terms, cancellation policy, and all terms & conditions, please see [Terms & Conditions](#).

Daily Itinerary

Arrive in Tours. Spend 1 night at a 3-star hotel. Dinner is on your own.

Your tour begins in Tours, a modern, dynamic, and lively city that clearly demonstrates a commitment to preserving its rich history. Tours is located less than 2 hours by train from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport and 1 hour from Paris. You may arrive at the time of your choosing to take advantage of the sights and energy of this university town. Your hotel in old Tours is just a 10 minute walk from the train station, or a short cab ride if you prefer. No activities are scheduled for this day.

The historic center of Tours is a wonderful place to visit on foot with its lovely old buildings, cathedral, and of course, its castle (which has an aquarium inside!)

You will spend this evening at the 3-star Best Western Central Hotel in downtown Tours.

Day 1: Cycle from Tours to Villandry - 22 km / 14 miles. Spend 1 night at a 3-star hotel. Dinner is included.

Around 9:30 am you will be welcomed by a Diverse Directions representative who will explain the tour's itinerary in detail; answer questions; deliver your route instructions, maps, and tourist information packet; and deliver / fit your bicycles. Your biking will begin along bike paths along the River Cher that will take you to Villandry. On the way you will pass the beautiful riverside village of Savonnières and the adjacent *Grottes Petrifiantes* (petrifying caves.) Formerly used as quarries, these caves are now open to the public for viewing their immense underground galleries. Of course, the highlight of today's ride is the Château de Villandry, one of the last great Renaissance castles to be built on the Loire. Best known for its internationally renowned gardens, Villandry's grounds contain canals, fountains, cascades, vine-covered pergolas, and a Romanesque village church.

You will spend this evening at the 3-star Auberge de Colombien in Villandry.

Day 2: Canoe from Savonnières to Bréhémont* (17 km / 3 hours) and cycle from Bréhémont to Azay (12 km / 7.5 miles). Spend 1 night at a 2-star hotel. Dinner is on your own.

***If you do not swim or just prefer, cycle from Villandry to Azay-le-Rideau - 13 km / 8 miles.**

For those who would enjoy an alternative view of the area, your Diverse Directions representative will meet you at your hotel for a descent of the Cher and Loire Rivers from Savonnières to Bréhémont. Your bikes will be waiting for you upon your arrival in Bréhémont for your resumption of cycling to Azay-le-Rideau by way of the Indre Valley.

For those who prefer to remain on terra firma, you have the option of leaving the valley to traverse Touraine's many apple and pear orchards as you head into slightly hillier terrain.

The main attraction in Azay-le-Rideau is its castle, truly one of the gems of the Renaissance, commanding a luxuriant setting on the banks of the River Indre. Its lines and dimensions suit the site so perfectly that it conveys an unforgettable impression of elegance. Partly built over the River Indre, Azay-le-Rideau consists of two main wings set at right angles. The reflections in the water add to the chimerical quality of the site and, together with the rows of houses and gardens along the Indre, make excellent subjects for photographs. The interior is lavishly decorated and furnished with some pieces of truly outstanding beauty.

Though you will definitely want to leave ample time for your visit to the Château d'Azay-le-Rideau, you also have the option of cycling a 21-km / 13-mile loop from Azay. This ride provides more cycling along the Indre; the opportunity to visit the Château de Saché (and Balzac Museum), where Honoré de Balzac lived during his most productive years; and a visit to Villaines-les-Rochers, France's center of wicker cultivation (the osier tree) and wicker weaving. En route, you

will also pass a number of troglodytic habitats, so be on the lookout for dwellings in the surrounding cliffs!

The historic center of the village of Azay-le-Rideau, where you will be staying, is another unforgettable French experience. You will spend this evening at the 2-star Hôtel de Biencourt, just steps from the castle.

Day 3: Cycle from Azay-le-Rideau to Chinon - 29 km / 18 miles. Spend 1 night in a 3-star hotel. Dinner is included.

Today's route traverses the National Forest of Chinon. This beautiful ride is refreshing to the soul, but is a bit more difficult on the legs, as you will encounter terrain that is a bit hillier than your cycling along the rivers. The day's ride ends in Chinon, a renowned medieval city of art and history wedged between the banks of the River Vienne and (of course) the towering heights of its castle. Chinon's main street is great for strolling, being open only to pedestrians. Numerous medieval houses show off picturesque details: half-timbered houses with carved corbels, stone gables with corner turrets, mullioned windows and sculpted doorways. The English Gardens also make for a nice stroll.

There is no need to sweat the climb to the castle; there is an elevator conveniently located in the center of town to whisk you to the castle and upper town. Recently renovated, the huge fortress castle was originally a Roman camp. The current structure dates largely from the 11th century.

You will spend this evening at the 3-star Best Western Hotel de France in the center of historic Chinon.

Day 4: Chinon to Langeais - 41 km / 25 miles. Spend 1 night at a Bed & Breakfast. Dinner is on your own.

On tiny country roads and bike paths, today's ride will take you back towards the tour's starting point by way of Avoine, with its aquatic center and giant toboggan, and the 15th century Château d'Ussé. Colloquially known as the "Sleeping Beauty" castle, legend has it that this castle inspired Charles Perrault to create the fairy tale of the same name. It is also believed to be among the castles that inspired the Disney castles.

Your cycling ends at the medieval Chateau de Langeais, with its exceptional collection of tapestries, which you saw from your canoe on Day 3. Langeais is a lovely village in which to spend your final evening soaking up all things French. You will spend your final evening at the Ange et Rêveur Bed & Breakfast in downtown Langeais.