

FRANCE – LOIRE VALLEY CASTLES & CHATEAUX

8-days / 7-nights **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn cycling through the Valley of the Kings from Blois



An eclectic mix of romantic chateaux, troglodyte cave homes, formal gardens, fine wine and French cuisine and a host of picturesque villages makes the Loire Valley a unique and popular destination. The castles of the Loire are the star attraction, from the fairy-tale 'Sleeping Beauty' Château d'Ussé to the military fortress of Langeais and magnificent Chenonceau. Easily accessed from Paris, hence its popularity with French and English kings, the Loire is the longest river in France, part tranquil, tamed by farming, and part wild and protected. Gentle rolling hills and tranquil rural scenery make the valley an ideal place for cycling. The valley supports a vibrant wine industry, renowned particularly for its whites, including Sancerre and crisp Chenin Blanc.

Departs: Daily on demand from 27 March to 10 October 2027

Cost from: **\$2540** per person twin-share Single room supplement from **\$835**
Seasonal supplements from **\$125 - \$255** per person for departures 10 April - 24 September

Also available: **E-bike** hire supplement: **\$435 per bike**

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation in comfortable 3-star hotels in ensuite rooms; 7 breakfasts; hire of multi-geared touring bike with lock, repair kit, pannier, bike insurance; luggage transfers; welcome briefing; digital documents including route book, navigation app & GPS data; emergency telephone hotline.

Not included: Other meals, drinks, personal expenses, optional visits or entry fees, local city taxes (paid locally), travel to/from the start/end of the tour. Printed route book and maps are available for a supplement (1 set per room) – please ask when booking. Helmet hire is not included; we recommend you take your own or purchase one locally.

Grading: Moderate, with daily distances of up to 80km, mostly on cycle paths and quiet side roads. Terrain is flat to gently undulating, with some hill climbs as you pass from one valley to another.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 03 5750 1441 for details and reservations



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive in Blois

Plan to arrive Blois mid-afternoon. The seat of French royalty for many years, Blois offers a mixture of architectural styles including Gothic, Renaissance and Classical.

Day 2: Blois – Tours

cycling @ 70km

From Blois, cycle close by the River Loire and briefly cross it to visit the most regal of all Loire castles, Château d'Amboise, perched high above the river. Whilst visiting Amboise, you may like to visit Clos Lucé, the famous house nearby where Leonardo da Vinci spent the last years of his life. The house contains many of his codex plans, and its gardens are full of reproductions of his contraptions. From Amboise continue on the Loire cycle path to Tours, or take the train (paid locally).

Day 3: Tours – Chinon

cycling @ 55km

Leave Tours following the river and come to Château de Villandry, famed for its elaborate formal gardens, then on to Château de Langeais, one of the few Loire chateaux built solely for military purposes, which offers spectacular views from its keep. Follow quiet roads to the edge of the Chinon forest and arrive at Château d'Ussé, known as 'Sleeping Beauty's castle'. Through quaint villages and on side roads make your way to Chinon on the River Vienne, dominated by the ruins of the medieval Chateau de Chinon. Originally built for the Counts of Blois, it fell to the house of Anjou in the 11th century and was seized in 1156 by King Henry II of England. Henry II fell in love with this beautiful town and the castle became one of his favourite residences. The castle came under French control early in the 13th century. Joan of Arc is reputed to have been a guest here of the French King Charles VII, in 1429 during the height of the Hundred Years' War.

Day 4: Chinon – Fontevraud – Chinon

cycling @ 60km

Ride from Chinon to Fontevraud l'Abbaye, one of the best preserved medieval abbeys in France and once regarded as the centre of civilization in Europe. Follow the Vienne River to the picturesque village of Candes-Saint-Martin, then on to Montsoreau where the Vienne merges with the Loire. Continue through meticulously tended vineyards to Fontevraud. Here you will find the tomb of Richard the Lionheart (although his heart was reportedly buried with his brother in Rouen). The Abbey and its community thrived during the 12th century under protection of the Plantagenet family but later during the French Revolution and under Napoléon it was used as a prison. Your journey then takes a literary return to Chinon, passing the birthplace of the celebrated writer François Rabelais.

Day 5: Chinon – Azay-le-Rideau

cycling @ 40km

Depart Chinon with its medieval streets and head north. Ride through historic vineyards and tranquil villages to Crissay, one of France's most beautiful villages. Cycle onwards through beech and oak forests to Azay-le-Rideau, where the eponymous chateau is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. You stay overnight right in the village, allowing a perfect opportunity to experience the castle's magic up close.

Day 6: Azay-le-Rideau – Chenonceaux

cycling @ 60km

Riding through romantic river landscapes you come to charming Montbazou. A brief climb is followed by a descent into the Cher valley. From there, gentle meadow paths guide you to Bléré and onward to Chenonceaux, home to the magnificent "Château des Dames" (the Ladies' Castle), Château de Chenonceau; much of the design and construction of the palace was overseen by women, including Catherine de Médiçi and Diane de Poitiers. A splendid two-story gallery bridge spans the river and the castle is fronted by exquisite gardens.

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Day 7: Chenonceaux – Blois

cycling @ 50km or 80km

A choice of routes today. The shorter route leads you through the gentle landscapes of Touraine to Château de Chaumont, then along romantic riverside paths to Blois, with free time in the afternoon. Alternatively, cycle via Montrichard, Cheverny, and Villesavin to Château de Chambord, one of the most iconic Loire chateaux with its French Renaissance architecture and decorative moat, then continue on to Blois.

Day 8: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast in Blois.



Other **Outdoor Travel** cycling destinations include Spain, France, Ireland, England and Scotland, Poland, the Czech Republic, New Zealand and Vietnam. We also offer group guided **Bike and Barge** or **Bike and Boat** cycling cruises in many destinations including along the canals and rivers of **France**.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:

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