



EXPLORE FRANCE AT YOUR OWN PACE

Day 1: Arrival in Chenonceau

Upon your arrival at the Tours central or St Pierre de Corps train station we will transfer you to your first hotel in Chenonceaux, a lovely small village and home of one of the most elegant chateaux in the region. Your trip package will be waiting for you at the hotel, and our Trip Manager will give you a call, to go over the tour and answer any questions you may have. Dinner tonight is included.

Day 2: Bourré to Château de Chenonceau 15 km / 9.3 miles

After breakfast, we transfer you to the little village of Bourré, by a troglodyte mushroom cave, which you can visit if you wish. Walk from there to Montrichard, on the banks of the Cher River, where you can climb up to its 11th century Donjon with a great panoramic view over the town and river below. You stay parallel to the river, through lovely villages such as Chissay and Chisseaux, en route to your destination of Chenonceau. You'll want to spend some time visiting the Renaissance "ladies" castle, one of the most popular in France. It was completed in the 16th century, when it was given as a gift by King Henry II to his beloved mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Diane has the stunning arched corridor spanning the river constructed and oversees the planting of its extensive gardens. She was the unquestioned mistress of the castle, but after King Henry II died in 1559, his strong-willed and jealous widow and Regent Catherine de Medici forced Diane to exchange it for the Château Chaumont, and triumphantly makes Chenonceau her own residence.

Day 3: Villandry to Azay le Rideau 13 km / 8 Miles

We drop you in the village of Villandry to start your day today, where you will likely decide to stop for a visit before you start walking. The castle in Villandry can be visited, but it is the beautiful Renaissance gardens that are of worldwide renown. You can wander through the vegetable gardens, flower gardens, water garden, and symbolic garden, all beautifully presented in formal patterns, outlined with low box hedges. The route then continues southwards, through forest and pretty fields of wheat and flowers, and wonderful vineyards, descending eventually to yet another River, the Indre, and the town of Azay le Rideau. You will want to take some time to explore the town and visit the castle - not one of the largest chateaux of the Loire in size, the 16th century castle of Azay is one of the prettiest, with the mix of Italian Renaissance style that was so popular, and the charm of a French castle on the water, as it sits on the banks of the Indre River.

Day 4: Panzoult to Chinon 16 km / 10 Miles

Today is a slightly longer walk, parallel to yet another river, the Vienne. We transfer you to start to the small but appealing wine co-operative of the village of Panzoult, in the heart of the Chinon vineyards. Poke around the little boutique of regional products, and don't be shy about tasting some wine - the French know that your palate is freshest for wine tasting in the morning! The walk, with some ups and downs, is beautiful. Your destination is medieval Chinon, a lovely and lively town spanning the banks of the river, but



your approach brings you via the renowned vineyards that have made the town's reputation amongst wine lovers of the world, for the delicious, crisp red wines, with their particular spiced-fruit flavours. Chinon is firmly anchored in the region's history; it was here that Joan of Arc arrived to convince the Dauphin King of her destiny to win back lost territories from the English. Imagine her plea to the unbelieving court as you wander the ruins of the castle today. You can spend some time wandering town, including Rue Voltaire with its many medieval houses, its boutiques and cafés, and of course taste some of the local wines, before your dinner tonight.



Day 5: Loop around Fontevraud 13 km / 8 Miles

We take you right to your final destination this morning, in the beautiful village of Fontevraud. From there, you have a loop walk, starting with a descent through vineyards to the banks of the Loire. Your route passes through the villages of Candés sur Loire, and Montsoreau, both listed in the official Prettiest Villages of France. You'll definitely want to spend some time exploring the tiny cobblestoned streets, their churches and panoramas over the river, and restaurants, where you can find some lunch. Once fortified, you'll be ready to attack the climb back away from the river, and heading back up onto the rich forested land around Fontevraud. You'll want to arrive back in time to visit the Royal Abbey, a spectacular site, both beautiful, and entrenched in a thousand of years of history. Take a moment as you explore this UNESCO Heritage site to feel moved by the site of the burial tombs of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and her son, Richard the Lionhearted, both at rest at the abbey with the Plantagenet King. Explore the vast gardens and the abbey buildings, and then refresh yourself with a drink at one of the cafés in the village before deciding where to have dinner.

Day 6: Turquant to Saumur 15 km / 9 Miles

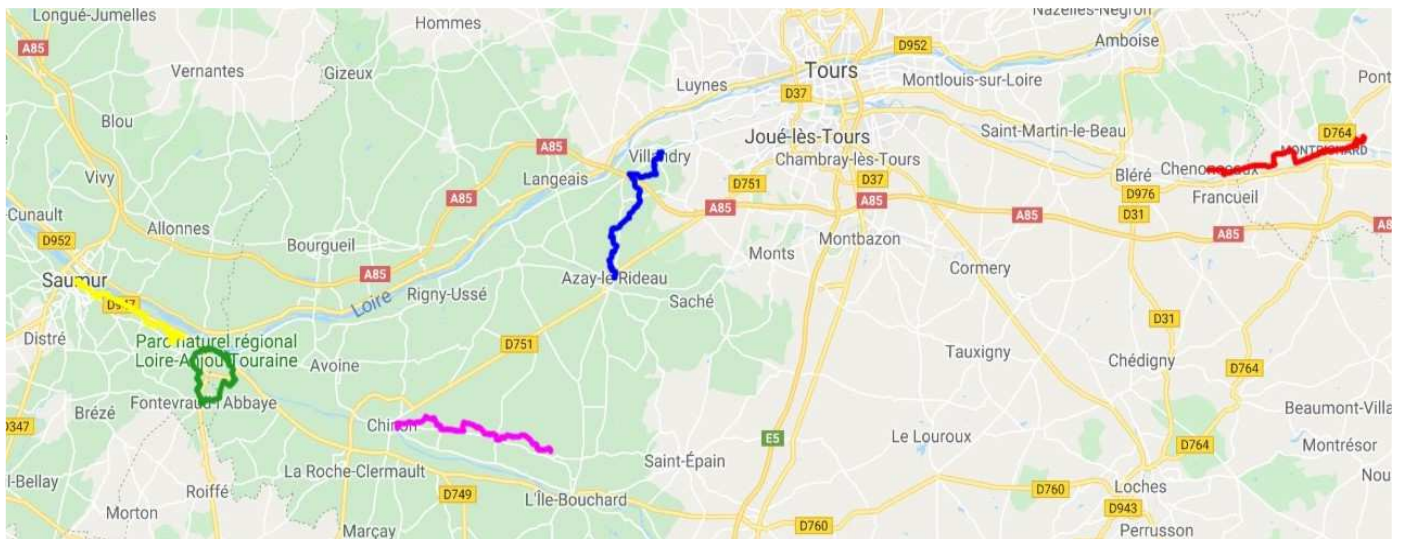
Your final day's walk has you following the banks of the Loire all the way in to medieval Saumur. We drop you off in the pretty village of Turquant, with its Tufa stone quarries and troglodyte homes. Meander close to the river, or up in the vineyards just above all day, passing through the remains of a whole troglodyte village in Souzay-Champigny, and a fun "pommes-tapées" (literally, smashed apples) producer along the way. You'll arrive in Saumur with a view of its impressive chateau overlooking the river and town below. We provide a self-guided walking tour to help you explore its many and varied sites: the medieval squares in the heart of town, several beautiful churches, the chateau itself, a great tank museum, and also several sites dedicated to horses, as one of France's great cavalry schools is based in Saumur. Your final dinner tonight is included at one of our favourite restaurants.

Day 7: Departure After a final breakfast, you can get connections out of Saumur train station for further travels.





WALKING IN THE LOIRE VALLEY: 6 NIGHT "Best Of"



What's included in your Loire Valley Walking Tour:

- 6 nights' accommodation of the comfort level of your choice: CLASSIC, CLASSIC + or DELUXE
- All breakfasts and 3 dinners (drinks not included with the dinners)
- Orientation with our Trip Manager at the start of the trip by phone
- Luggage transfers from hotel to hotel
- Transfer to first hotel from Tours or St Pierre de Corps train station
- Taxi transfers to the start of the walks
- Detailed maps and step-by-step route instructions
- Uploadable GPS file of the route to use on a free APP in your smartphone
*Can be used without international internet plan (offline)
- Regional information and advice
- Phone call support 7 days a week

