

EXPLORE!

Loire Valley Cycling

8 days

France - Trip code LV



Loire Valley Cycling

Bountiful vineyards, fruit orchards and delightful villages all explain why the beautiful Loire Valley is known as 'the garden of France'. On this relaxed ride we follow quiet country roads from Chenonceaux to Chinon, exploring the medieval chateau perched on an island in Azay-le-Rideau, visit Leonardo da Vinci's final home at Clos Lucé and discovering the elegant Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Châteaux of the Loire Valley** - Explore the magnificent chateaux by bike in the 'Garden of France'
- ★ **Food and Wine** - Experience fine local cuisine and optional wine tasting
- ★ **Montrichard** - Bustling market town with a rich Medieval heritage
- ★ **Chateau of Chenonceau** - The Ladies' Chateau spanning the Cher river and is among the most photographed of the Loire

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

CYCLING GRADE:

Easy

Suitable for anyone who enjoys easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip Chenonceaux

We start our trip in the tiny village of Chenonceaux, home to one of the most famous and beautiful chateau in France. We are able to offer private transfer from Tours Airport. Please contact Explore for more information. If you wish to drive to the start of the trip please ask us for parking details.



Accommodation: Hotel Relais de Chenonceaux (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Circular ride to Montrichard for wine tasting or chateau visit

Having had a chance to familiarise ourselves with our bikes, we start by exploring the area around Chenonceaux. There is the opportunity to cycle east of the village to Montrichard where we can taste the local wines of the Cher region, or visit the 17th century chateau of Gue Pean, a gentle introductory ride. Alternatively, you can just follow the local backroads through small, quiet villages. In the afternoon you may like to tour the large Monmousseau winery or visit the Mushroom Museum or a troglodyte dwelling. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres (Total 83 metres ascent and 86 meters descent)



Accommodation: Hotel Relais de Chenonceaux (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Cycle along forest paths to Amboise

After an optional visit to the chateau we pedal through the village of Chissay. We cycle through the tranquil forest and several pretty villages to our overnight stop at Amboise. On arrival you may choose to visit Clos Lucé, the house where Leonardo da Vinci spent his last 3 years and now a museum dedicated to his life and work and the Royal chateau on the banks of the Loire. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 40 kilometres (Total 161 metres ascent and 164 meters descent)



Accommodation: Hotel Chaptal (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Pedal a cross country route to Azay-le-Rideau

A longer days' cycling on cross country routes via St Martin-le-Beau and Nitray to Cormery, a town famous for its macaroons, and then along the River Indre, with optional visits to Pont-de-Ruan and Sâche, home of Balzac and now the site of an excellent museum of literature. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 59 kilometres (Total 210 metres ascent and 222 meters descent)



Accommodation: Hotel de Biencourt (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Spend the day exploring Azay

We spend the day in Azay, where we can visit the château and walk in its gardens along the banks of the River Indre. For those wanting to explore further, south-east of Azay is the troglodyte village of Villaines-les-Rochers, now famous for its willow basketweaving. Or north of Azay is Villandry, with its beautifully recreated Renaissance garden, one of the finest in the whole of France. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 37 kilometres (Total 108 metres ascent and 108 meters descent) or 51 kilometres (Total 164 metres ascent and 164 meters descent) depending on which route chosen.



Accommodation: Hotel de Biencourt (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Cycle to Chinon through the fairy tale scenery

South-west of Azay, en-route to Chinon and situated between the banks of the Loire and the Forest of Chinon, is the Château d'Ussé - a truly romantic château and reputedly the setting for the fairy tale 'Sleeping Beauty'. On the north bank of the river are the vineyards of Bourgueil, famous for their velvety red wines. A variety of routes to Chinon are possible, depending on your preferences. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 39 kilometres (Total 289 metres ascent and 297 meters descent)



Accommodation: Hotel Le Lion D'Or (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Cycle the 'Wine Route' of Chinon or explore the town

Today we suggest you walk through the cobbled streets of the old town of Chinon and up to the château, where Joan of Arc identified the Dauphin, or cycle the circular 'Wine Route' of Chinon southeast along the River Vienne experiencing the famous Chinon vineyards as you go. Alternatively, you can take a westerly direction with the option to visit Fontevraud Abbey, which houses the tombs of the Plantagenet Kings including Henry II and Richard the Lionheart. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 32 kilometres (Total 33 metres ascent and 33 meters descent) or 44 kilometres (Total 136 metres ascent and 136 meters descent) depending on which route taken.



Accommodation: Hotel Le Lion D'Or (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends St. Pierre-des-Corps train station in Tours

After breakfast we drive to St. Pierre-des-Corps train station in Tours where the trip ends. We are able to offer private transfers to Tours Airport. If you would like to arrange this, please contact Explore for more information.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

General cycling information

On this trip we cycle 235 km over six days (an average of 39 km per day) with further optional rides available. Two of the cycling days are circular routes and therefore optional. We cycle mainly on tarmac country lanes and gravel tracks. Maps are provided to cycle individually or in groups while the Explore Leader drives the support vehicle, except on circular routes when the Explore Leader will cycle with the group. We have graded the route as easy.

Bike included

21 gear RTE 520 hybrid bikes

Bike information

Your included bike is a 21 gear RTE 520 hybrid and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A 16-litre pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle carries the luggage from point to point and is driven by the Explore Leader. Maps are provided to cycle individually or as a group. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

Easy

Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bicycle
Taxi



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver



Accommodation

6 nights standard hotel
1 nights simple hotel

Trip information

Country information

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Climate

Across France, from April - August, weather conditions are generally warm and pleasant with moderate rainfall; Autumn temperatures are a bit lower and the winter months (though colder) remain mild. The summer months on the Mediterranean Coast in the south tend to be warmer than the rest of France and have less rainfall, and also more mild winters; freezing conditions are nearly unheard of. The mountainous areas of the Alps, Juros and Pyrenees can be quite different. During summer the morning and evening temperatures are considerably cooler and it becomes much colder in winter with heavy snowfall. Western France, along the English Channel, there can be very strong winds and frequent rain during the winter months Nov - Apr. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Catholic

Language

French

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Montrichard - Entrance to Keep Euros 5 mornings. Montrichard - Entrance to Château of Gue Pean Euros 5. Chenonceaux - Château of Chenonceau Euros 9. Amboise - Entrance to château Euros 8 and to Clos Luce Euros 12. Villandry - Entrance to château and gardens Euros 7.50, to gardens only Euros 5. Usse - Entrance to château Euros 11.

Clothing

In general pack for warm weather. However, you must bring a warm sweater or jacket for cycling on cool days and for wearing during the evenings. In case of rain, waterproofs are essential. Also, a pair of long trousers or tracksuit bottoms are useful for cycling along hedgerow-lined footpaths. There are some opportunities to swim in the rivers or local swimming pools. Please note that French health regulations require men to wear \proper\ Lycra trunks rather than shorts in the pool.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trips that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage in a soft rucksack or holdall (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. We are unable to carry excess luggage above this allowance. Any excess luggage should either be left in storage or forwarded by you to the hotel in Chinon. Suitcases are not recommended. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your

hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

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Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£11

Dinner price

£16.00 - 18.00

Beer price

£4

Water price

£1.3

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pounds Sterling and US Dollars can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change. Please change currency into Euros prior to arriving in France.

Where To Exchange

Bureau de Change can only be found in major cities and large airports. Many French banks no longer exchange Foreign currency.

ATM Availability

In cities and most major towns

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants (make sure you have informed your credit card company that you are travelling abroad as some companies will reject payments)

Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques are no longer commonly accepted and can only be changed in larger airports with a Bureau de Change.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bicycle, Taxi

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

France: Visas are not required by UK, EU, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

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Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
