

# Châteaux of the Loire

## Hotel-to-hotel lower independent cycling

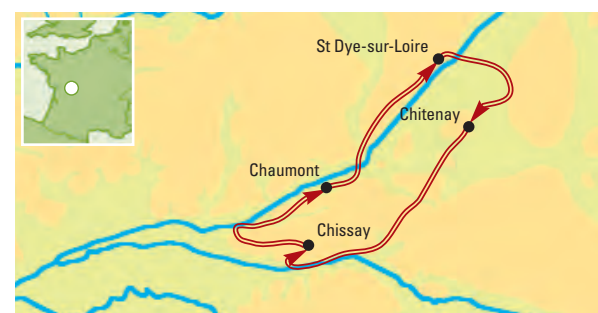
- Perfect cycling routes: traffic-free lanes, flat paths, majestic forests, vines and sunflowers
- Hand-picked hotels in fabulous locations; superb cuisine throughout
- Renaissance splendour of Chenonceau – “jewel in the Loire crown”
- Masses of historic and cultural interest: pretty wine villages, charming medieval towns, more châteaux than you ever knew existed!
- Wine tasting opportunities galore



This ever-popular cycling holiday explores the “magic triangle” of the majestic Loire and Cher rivers, with the pretty Cisse valley winding through the middle. The cycling is easy, and mostly flat, following little country lanes and river banks, through a region packed with interest. Highlights include the beautiful Renaissance château at Chenonceau, which famously straddles the Cher; the flamboyant royal palace at Amboise, proudly dominating the riverside and town, and the dramatic château at Chaumont, once owned by Catherine de Medici (before being forcibly “exchanged” for Chenonceau in a bitter love-battle with her husband’s mistress), and occupying one of the most stunning sites of all the river’s châteaux.

You can visit the elegant Clos Lucé, the C15 manor house where Italian genius, Leonardo da Vinci, spent the last four years of his life; the historic town of Blois which has long enjoyed strong connections with nobility and royalty, and fairytale Chambord, probably the most ostentatious of all the Loire treasures.

The hotels on this circuit are superbly placed for you to easily visit all the “must see” sights in this region and range from a fabulous ★★★★★ château to an imposing C17 wine-brokers lodge on the banks of the river. Meals throughout are of a very high quality and, of course, world-famous local wines are in abundance!



## CHÂTEAUX OF THE LOIRE | DAY BY DAY

### Day 1 Arrive at Chissay

We meet you at Blois station and take you (35 mins) to Chissay where your fabulous château hotel awaits. Time for a swim before dinner.

### Day 2 Chissay to Chaumont 42km/28mi

Today's route takes you west along a marked cycle route through the *Forêt d'Amboise* and to the bustling and lively town of Amboise. Packed with interest, you have time to explore its narrow cobbled streets, stroll along the quayside and visit the house (Le Clos Lucé) where Leonardo da Vinci spent the last four years of his life. Masses of lunch choices in the popular old quarter before heading north-east through vineyards and poppy fields and on to Chaumont in time for a well deserved swim before dinner.

### Day 3 At Chaumont

The château here once belonged to Catherine de Medici and is quite spectacular. The beautiful park surrounding the château was added in the 19th century and, between May and October, it hosts the International Garden Festival - fabulous 'conceptual' gardens created by green fingered artists and, unusually, philosophers! Or you can cross the river and take the train from Onzain to the bustling university town of Tours. Alternatively just relax by the hotel pool.

### Day 4 Chaumont to St Dye-sur-Loire 40km/25mi

Today's route takes you over the river Loire and on quiet country lanes to Blois where you can ride round the château in a horse and cart if you need to give your cycling legs a rest! If you're with children, then Houdini's House of Magic is a must, but everyone will enjoy exploring the warren of cobbled streets and pretty arcaded squares. Lots of lunch options before carrying on through well-tended vineyards – plenty of tasting opportunities – and sleepy villages to our elegant riverside hotel in St Dye-sur-Loire.

### Day 5 At St Dye-sur-Loire

Explore the graceful village and its old ramparts then we suggest an easy-paced 7km cycle (route notes provided) through the huge Forêt de Boulogne to the fairytale Château at Chambord. The sheer size – it boasts 440 rooms – of this enormous palace reflects the lavish and flamboyant lifestyle of its original owner, King François I. The surrounding park is today a national nature reserve, protecting all sorts of wildlife including deer, boar and eagles.

### Day 6 St Dye-sur-Loire to Chitenay 40km/25mi

Much of today's route is along the dedicated cycling paths that link selected châteaux in this region. Highlights include Château de Villesavin (unusual museum of wedding dresses throughout the ages and a huge collection of horse-drawn carriages) and the richly decorated Château de Troussay – be sure to take a look at the elaborately painted ceilings. The surrounding parkland is worth a detour too – many of the ancient trees are hundreds of years old. Your final stretch takes you along quiet rural roads to the pretty wine village of Chitenay where the affable Gilles Martinet and his team will be waiting for you – Gilles is a pretty competent wine buff, so feel free to soak up his expertise (no pun intended!).

### Day 7 At Chitenay

It's very tempting to stay in Chitenay – lots of wine *dégustations* in the village – but it would be a great shame to miss out on a trip to Château de Cheverny, just 7kms/4mi away (we provide cycling route notes). Made of brilliant white stone, this is arguably the most immaculate of all the Loire châteaux, and is also home to the region's largest collection of fine art. Another option is a 12km/7.5mi round trip cycling through the Russy Forest and to the stunning C16 Château de Beauregard – here you'll find a rare "kitchen" garden (400+ plant species) and the recently restored *Galerie des Illustres* portrait gallery.

### Day 8 Chitenay to Chissay 41km/26mi

Head south past well-tended and sleepy hamlets surrounded by fields of sunflowers stopping off perhaps at the fortified château of Fougères-sur-Bievre. Past Sambin to the superb Château de Chenonceau with its famous arches majestically spanning the river. Described by Flaubert as floating "on air and water" it's arguably the most beautiful of all the Loire landmarks. After a visit here it's an easy cycle on to the Château de Chissay for a well earned dip in the pool.

### Day 9 Leave Chissay

## CHÂTEAUX OF THE LOIRE | WHERE YOU STAY



**Château de Chissay**  
★★★★  
Chissay  
Days 1+8



**Hostellerie du Château**  
★★★★  
Chaumont  
Days 2+3



**Manoir Bel Air**  
★★★  
St Dye-sur-Loire  
Days 4+5



**Auberge du Centre**  
★★★  
Chitenay  
Days 6+7

For extra nights we recommend Chissay and Chaumont, and city add-ons can be arranged in Paris.

"It makes for the perfect holiday."  
Mrs M Coburn.

## Dates and Prices

### Departs every two days

2012 departures	Tour Only
May 11-25, Sep 12-20	\$3,320
May 27-31, Jun 8-12	\$3,298
Sep 2-10	\$3,298
Jun 2-6, Jun 14-Jul 8	\$3,369
Aug 29-31	\$3,369
Jul 10-Aug 27	\$3,398
Child (any dates, see notes)	\$1,991

**Singles:** Add \$66 per night for sole occupancy of a double room.

**Child:** Over 2 and under 12, sharing with 2 adults.

**Room upgrade:** Prices from \$26 per person, per night based on 2 sharing.

**Holiday type:** Independent cycling, hotel-to-hotel, no minimum group size.

**Departs:** Every two days from May 11 to Sep 20.

**Duration:** 9 days (8 nights).

**Meals:** Continental breakfast and evening meals.

**Other details:** For "What your holiday price includes," see "Holiday Planning" section pp 48-51.

## Tailor-made travel choices

### Nearest Arrival Airport: Paris CDG Airport

Flights can be arranged from most US/CANADA airports, with connecting transfers as required, prices and details on request.

**The above prices include our standard transfers:** Blois train station at 17:27, (transfer to hotel, 35 mins, provided).

**Return:** Blois train station by 09:48 (transfer provided).

**Rail options:** Paris Austerlitz to Blois 15:39/17:27. Return: Rail Blois to Paris Austerlitz 09:48/11:44.

**Second Class French Rail:** Add \$97 per person, round trip.

**First Class French Rail:** Add \$147 per person, round trip.

**Tour only:** Transfers included from Blois train station at 17:27 and back to Blois train station departing at 09:00.

C08LR