



# Fruits of the Forest

Single center  and upper  independent walking

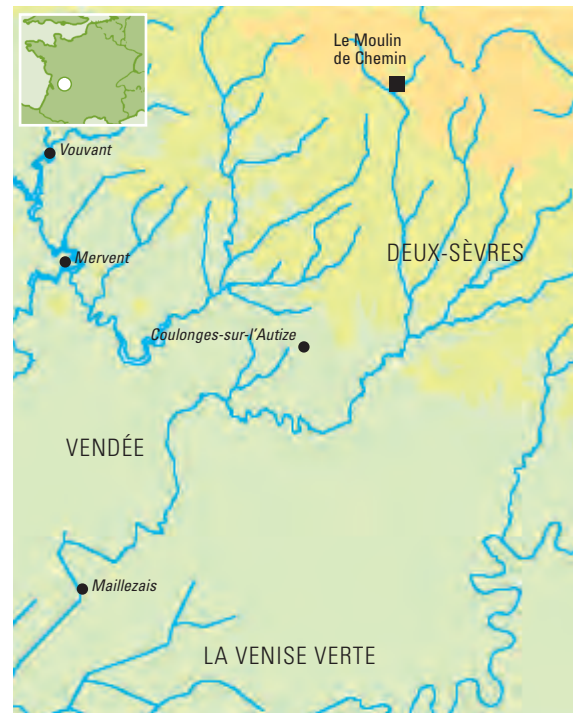
- Beautifully restored C17 mill, with private heated swimming pool; exceptional hospitality, great bonhomie!
- Fully inclusive, even apéritifs, unlimited wines and coffee - even the postcards are free!
- A wine buffs delight - more than a dozen different wines offered during your stay
- Untouched walking country - walking choices most days - rich in flora and steeped in history
- Over 2000 hours of sunshine a year; **no single supplement on any date**



Tucked away just outside the secluded little hamlet of Scillé below a patchwork of yellow fields and green woods is  Le Moulin du Chemin. Originally a cereal mill, dating back to 1650, Le Moulin has been beautifully converted into a small private auberge with particular appeal to walkers.

You stay as guests of Carolynn Grimaldi and Peter Roche. The accommodation is tastefully furnished, and each room has its own tea/coffee making facilities. Cold drinks – soft and alcoholic – are available, free of charge, on a “help yourself” basis so guests really feel at home. Peter is a keen walker and wine enthusiast (and will happily advise on both) and Carolynn is *chef de cuisine*. Freshly baked crusty baguettes, croissants and a mouthwatering selection of home-made jams appear at breakfast. Copious picnic lunches are provided and each evening is like an exclusive, yet leisurely and informal, en-famille dinner party – pool-side apéritifs followed by a delicious 4-course dinner accompanied by a variety of excellent (and free-flowing!) table wines.

Our walking routes are easy, varied and interesting - a selection is suggested opposite, however lots of other choices are also available. It's a region of peaceful rolling pastures, orchards and woods, criss-crossed by ancient by-ways, crystal streams and mysterious paths, collectively known as *bocage*. Soft fruits, edible berries, apples and peaches can be picked from hedgerows, and sweet chestnuts, walnuts and hazelnuts provide welcome shade. The famous Loire châteaux, La Rochelle and the famous distilleries at Cognac are all within a couple of hours' drive.



## FRUITS OF THE FOREST | DAY BY DAY

### Day 1 Arrive at Le Moulin du Chemin

Optional circular walk following the "Apple and Woodlouse Trail" (6km/4mi) before welcome *apéritifs* and dinner.

### Day 2 Five Villages Walk or Busseau 16km/10mi/4.5hr

The route today takes you south of Le Moulin, following a shady woodland path, skirting the very lowest foothills of the Pays de Gâtine. You traverse fruit-filled orchards, cross an ancient little bridge, and pass the red-roofed fortified farm at La Verdonnière (est 1619). You're likely to see swallowtail butterflies, hen harriers and buzzards circling overhead. Onto the village of La Fazilière where an interesting waymarked path takes in the restored *lavoir* and steeping ponds of the ancient *vanniers* (basket makers), founders of the original village.

### Day 3 Coulonges-sur-l'Autize 10km/6mi/3hr or 15km/9mi/4.5hr

A short drive (20mins) to Coulonges-sur-l'Autize. Take time to visit the bustling country market, impressive Renaissance château and pretty Romanesque church. It's then easy walking through open meadows, passing vineyards and fields of bright yellow sunflowers. There are lots of lovely spots to stop for a picnic then, after lunch, meander through open countryside back to Coulonges. If a cool beer beckons, head for the colourful Topsy bar just behind the market square!

### Day 4 Le Beugnon Lakes Picnic 12km/7.5mi/3.5hr or 16km/9.5mi/4hr

Starting from le Moulin, follow the leafy valley past timeless pastures where fields of immaculately groomed Parthenaise cattle peacefully graze, through open woods of sweet chestnut, oak and beech, past orchards and alongside gently rippling streams. A gradual descent on a wooded lane leads you to the clear lakes where a pre-arranged picnic will have been set up for you. Time for swimming and sun bathing by the pool before dinner.

### Day 5 Marais Poitevin 8km/5mi/2.5hr or 12km/8mi/3.5hr

Today you explore the Marais Poitevin, a marshland area, originally drained by mediaeval monks, and known locally as "Green Venice". Recently declared a National Park, it's a lazy landscape of rolling hills and meadows, criss-crossed by an elaborate network of C12 canals. See the impressive ruins of the fortified Benedictine Abbaye de Maillezais, perched on a grassy hill, once an island, from where you can view punts gliding effortlessly past the far end of the gardens.

### Day 6 Mervent Forest and Vouvant 12km/7.5mi/4hr or 23km/14mi/7hr

The main part of your walk today is along a lovely shady path following the contours of the majestic 5,000 hectare Mervent Forest. Lunch by the lake or take the ochre-coloured path up above the River Mère – fabulous views over the surrounding Vendéen countryside. The more energetic can continue to Vouvant, one of the prettiest villages in France and an excellent picnic spot. Visit the *donjon* (conjured by the fairy Melusine in 1242), the attractive Romanesque church (the rich sculpture round its main doorway depicting mythological animals, the Last Supper and Samson overcoming a lion and with Delilah), and the famous Roman Bridge.

### Day 7 Leave Le Moulin du Chemin



*"Peter and Carolyn run an excellent operation. It felt like a house party, staying with old friends!"*

*Mr C Wright*

## Dates and Prices

Departs most Sundays	Tour Only
<b>2012 departures</b>	
Apr 15, 29, Sep 30, Oct 14	\$2,473
Apr 1, 8, May 6, Sep 23	\$2,473
May 13, 27, Sep 2, 16	\$2,597
Jun 3, 10, 24, Aug 26	\$2,597
Jul 1, 22, 29, Aug 5, 19	\$2,617

**Singles:** No single supplement on any departure.

**Child:** This holiday is unsuitable for children under 16.

**Holiday type:** Independent walking, single centre, no minimum group size.

**Departs:** Selected Sundays from Apr 1 to Oct 14.

**Duration:** 7 days (6 nights).

**Meals:** All meals (including wine).

**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, prices and details on request.

**Other details:** Car rental is essential (inquire for rates and details). Drive to Le Moulin from Paris approx 5 hrs 30 mins. **Return:** Drive from Le Moulin to Paris.

**Tour only:** The start point for this holiday is Le Moulin du Chemin.

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## FRUITS OF THE FOREST | WALKING DETAILS



The walking is easy, varied and interesting with a few ups and downs, and all walks can be tailored to suit you.



**Average daytime temperature (°C):**

17 25 27 26 22  
MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP



**Average monthly rainfall (mm):**

59 57 46 48 53  
MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP