

Bicycle Tours in France: Cycling the Loire Valley - Sightseer Tour

OVERVIEW

No region in France is as representative of the country's royal splendor as the Loire Valley. With grand chateaux, hilltop villages, and lazy rivers that wind through forests and vineyards, the Loire offers a feast for the senses that proclaims, "This is France!"

- Relish traffic-free routes along designated bike paths and quiet country roads.
- Appreciate gentle cycling terrain.
- Enjoy a variety of activities including a guided tour of Leonardo da Vinci's Clos Lucé.
- Stay in delightful hotels (and a castle!) without having to pack each night.
- Engage with family and friends while exercising and relaxing in a gorgeous area.

HIGHLIGHTS

French villages of Azay-le Rideau, Amboise, Tours, and Cheverny, Spectacular castles and gardens including Chambord and Chenonceau, Guided tour of Leonardo da Vinci's Clos Lucé, Guided tour of Chenonceau, Sleep in a castle, built between the 15th and 19th centuries, Pools in two of three hotels, A special behind-the-scenes tour of Chambord

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	 SightSeer: Learn more about our SightSeer tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/sightseer
Includes	8 days, 7 nights accommodation; 4 dinners with wine, 7 breakfasts; entry to Chambord and Chenonceaux; shuttle from Tours to the tour start; shuttle at the end of the tour to a nearby train station;
Countries	France
Begin/End	Tours / Cheverny with a shuttle to Tours
Arrive/Depart	Paris: Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) or Orly (ORY)
Total Distance	238-286km (147-177 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	Average if you ride every day 48 km (30 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	
Keep in Mind	We work hard to maintain consistency across all of our tours, but some trips have unique differences. Here are some things to keep in mind about this tour. Because you will be using bike paths there will be limited van support. Some bike paths are very popular so although car traffic is minimal you will have instances of bike traffic.

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the  **online itinerary** for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip:

<https://www.experienceplus.com/bike-tours/france/loire-valley>

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DATES & PRICES

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	43km / 194m (27mi / 636ft)	Gentle	▶▶▶▶▶	
3	64km / 426m (40mi / 1397ft)	Gentle		
4	47km / 356m (29mi / 1168ft)	Rolling hills	▶▶▶▶▶	
5	39km / 348m (24mi / 1141ft)	Gentle	▶▶▶▶▶	
6	45km / 336m (28mi / 1102ft)	Gentle	▶▶▶▶▶	
7	51km / 245m (32mi / 804ft)	Gentle	▶▶▶▶▶	
8	0km / 0m (0mi / 0ft)			

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Arrive in Azay-le-Rideau, France

Highlights Château of Azay-le-Rideau

Meet your complimentary ExperiencePlus! shuttle at 12 noon at the Saint Pierre des Corps train station (4 km outside of Tours). We'll whisk you off through French writer Honoré de Balzac's favorite countryside, to our charming country inn in Azay-le-Rideau. Make sure to visit its fairy-tale chateau: one of the most striking in all of France. Balzac once described this château as "a diamond set in the Indre River valley." We'll fit bicycles this afternoon, do a short test ride, and enjoy a special welcome dinner together.

DAY 1

Meals Dinner

Lodging ■ Le Grand Monarque

Château de Langeais and Ussé

Highlights Castles of Langeais and Ussé

Today, we'll suggest a ride to the Château de Langeais, and then on to the Château d'Ussé. A perennial ExperiencePlus! favorite for its medieval feel, tapestries, and intriguing history, the Château de Langeais boasts the oldest building you'll see all week: a tenth century keep. Continue pedaling along the Loire River to the Château d'Ussé, famed as the inspiration for Charles Pérault's Sleeping Beauty.

DAY 2

Distance 43 km (27 mi)

Gain 194 m (636 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level >>>>>

Meals Breakfast

Lodging ■ Le Grand Monarque

Amboise

Highlights Château de Villandry, Tours, Leonardo da Vinci's Amboise

Today's ride features the Château de Villandry, the last of the large Châteaux built along the Loire during the Renaissance. Visit the spectacular, ornamental gardens before continuing on bike paths by half-timber houses in Tours. From there, it's a short ride to the town of Amboise which boasts the manor house of Le Clos Lucé, where Leonardo da Vinci came to spend the last three years of his life upon invitation from the French King Francis I. Leonardo is buried in the castle's chapel.

DAY 3

Distance 64 km (40 mi)

Gain 426 m (1397 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging ■ Hotel le Clos d'Amboise

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Highlights Château d'Amboise, guided tour of Leonardo da Vinci's Clos Lucé

Take the day off your bike today to explore the rich town of Amboise. Start with a fascinating guided tour of the Clos Lucé, where Leonardo da Vinci spent the final years of his life. Walk through his bedroom, discover where he worked, and stroll through the vast gardens where many of his inventions were constructed for the first time. You'll have plenty of time to visit the enormous castle, taste some excellent chocolate, and lounge around the pool this afternoon. If you're set on riding your bike, Vouvray, home of world class Chenin Blanc wines awaits.

DAY 4

Distance 47 km (29 mi)

Gain 356 m (1168 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level 

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  Hotel le Clos d'Amboise

Amboise

Highlights Château de Chenonceau; canoe trip down the Cher River

Head off toward the Cher River this morning where we'll regroup to canoe to the famous castle of Chenonceau. The castle forms a bridge across the river, one of the tributaries to the Loire. You'll leave your canoe here for a free afternoon to explore the castle, once occupied by Diane de Poitiers, mistress to Henri II. After the king's death in 1599, Queen Catherine de Medici reclaimed the castle and evicted de Poitiers. You can still explore the two separate gardens created for these two women.

DAY 5

Distance 39 km (24 mi)

Gain 348 m (1141 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level 

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  Hotel le Clos d'Amboise

Cheverny

Highlights Château de Chaumont, Fougères, Breuil

Pedal along the Loire river again to Chaumont, with its spectacular gardens, park, and castle perched over the Loire river valley. From there you'll bicycle to Fougères, a lesser-known castle well worth the visit. The 15-19th century castle you'll be sleeping in tonight is surrounded by a 110-acre park. Tonight, feast on a gourmet meal together in our château.

DAY 6

Distance 45 km (28 mi)

Gain 336 m (1102 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  Château du Breuil

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Highlights Château de Chambord and Cheverny

You have the chance to visit two of the most popular Loire Châteaux today: Chambord and Cheverny. Some say Leonardo da Vinci designed the opulent 400-room Château de Chambord when he lived at the royal court. The Château nearly bankrupted the French treasury before its completion in 1685. Enjoy a unique behind-the-scenes tour of the castle this morning. After lunch, pedal to Cheverny, another long-time favorite of ours. A celebratory dinner together this evening at our castle.

DAY 7

Distance 51 km (32 mi)

Gain 245 m (804 ft)

Terrain Gentle

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  Château du Breuil

Farewell

Highlights Bon voyage!

Your tour ends after breakfast today. We hope you've enjoyed this relaxing cultural and historic exploration of the Loire! We'll offer a shuttle this morning to the nearby Blois Chambord train station with connections to Paris. The shuttle arrives there around 10 a.m. Bon voyage!

DAY 8

Meals Breakfast

INCLUDED

WHAT'S INCLUDED

When you book a tour with ExperiencePlus! our goal is to ensure your only focus each day is to hop on your bike and explore scenic cycling routes in new destinations. Inclusions may differ depending on which tour style you pick but all ExperiencePlus! tours include what we believe are the most important aspects of a bike tour.

- On all our guided tours, you can expect superb tour leaders who are fun and multilingual, bi-cultural experts, and cycling enthusiasts. They will support you and help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- High quality bikes selected for the terrain you are cycling on and correct bike fitting to ensure comfortable cycling.
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel. Plus, all the logistics are taken care of.

PRE-TRIP SUPPORT

- Bicycle training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Planning tips on what to pack, hotel recommendations and other helpful details from our Travel Planning Pages: <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/>
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing EP!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Explorer and Self-guided tour styles excluded)
- See "What's Included" for tour-specific inclusions and be sure to check the "Keep in mind" section under "Tour Summary" online.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see: <https://www.experienceplus.com/what-to-expect/our-bikes/>. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer and Self-guided tours we include a GPS device on all bikes.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

On a guided tour, each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. On a self-guided tour you'll receive a comprehensive orientation and bike fit on the first or second morning of your trip. About 14 days prior to your tour, we will provide you with access to

RideWithGPS Experiences, our platform to distribute information on each tour day's activities, meals and ride, as well as GPS-routes.

Daily information on the RWGPS Experience includes important phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat and Expedition tours we also navigate using our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map. On Explorer tours the terrain and destinations are not always conducive to using chalk arrows so we'll ride as a group or you can navigate on your own with the GPS tracks.

On a guided tour you will have a support van providing water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, a lift for tired cyclists, and luggage transfers. On some itineraries the van will not be able to follow sections of the route that stray from the road for example onto cycling paths. On a self-guided tour you will have luggage transfers that will transport your bags from one hotel to the other.

Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options or ask when you are planning your self-guided trip.

Need Fewer Miles? On a guided tour, the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. On a self-guided tour we recommend you review the tour level to make sure you can ride the full distance.

ON A GUIDED TOUR: TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADERS

If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5-8% of the tour cost per traveler — this is for the entire tour leader team, not each tour leader. You can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your tour leaders did not quite meet your expectations, please let us know. *Tips are included in Expedition pricing and not expected on self-guided tours.

PHOTOS:

By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or that are taken by our guides or other travelers, in any medium, including but not limited to print, electronic media, or Internet, free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you, you must inform us or your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

STYLES

OUR TOUR STYLES

We realize that one size does not fit all and there are as many ways to travel by bike as there are different types of cyclists and travelers.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? Our unique chalk arrows lead the way as you explore small villages and world-class cities while traveling at your own pace.

- Tour Length: 7-15 days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van support and chalk arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4.5

Explorer Tours: Travel further off the beaten path - we let the destination dictate where we ride, not the road surface.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days
- Hotels: 2-3 stars
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2 tour leaders, GPS and van support
- Price: \$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Bike and Boat Tours: Spend days cycling and your evenings relaxing on a private boat as you cruise to your next port.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days, some itineraries have land-based extensions available.
- Barge/Boat: 3-4 star, same cabin for the entire boat trip except for land extension.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation and support: 2 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Expedition Tours: Multi-week tours where you spend long days on the bike with the added satisfaction of pedaling across multiple countries.

- Tour Length: 15-40 days
- Hotels: 2-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: \$\$\$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

Self-guided Tours: perfect for those who have an independent spirit, want the flexibility to choose their own dates, and don't need van support or tour leaders during their trip. Every departure is a private tour!

- Tour Length: 6-8-days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel on bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: GPS routes and luggage transfers
- Price: \$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

**LEVELS**

We know that travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. We have rated each day of our tours on a scale of 1-5. Our Tour Level's are an average of the day rating on tour. We recommend looking at the daily summary on the PDF and Website Itinerary to see details about each day's ride.

LEVEL 1 - 1.5

Level 1 - 1.5 days will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 50 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 20 - 50 km. (12-30 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 0-400 M (0-1200 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

LEVEL 2 - 2.5

Level 2 - 2.5 days are ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-60 km (18 - 38 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 400 - 600 m (1200 - 2000 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

LEVEL 3 - 3.5

Level 3 - 3.5 days are great for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km (30-45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 600 - 900m (2000 - 2800 ft)
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

LEVEL 4 - 4.5

Level 4 - 4.5 days are the best riding days for avid cyclists or very active individuals who are excited to challenge themselves on a bike.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km (45-55 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 900-1000m (2800-3600 ft)
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 — 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITION)

Our Expedition tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages mean limited van support so we recommend these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 500-2000 m (1600- 6500 ft)
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

A tour level is the average of the days so we recommend you look at the day level on each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

CHECKLIST

TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- Read through your Reservation Confirmation and After you Book Information (link sent to you by e-mail), it has important information to help you plan your trip!
- Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.
- Complete the Customer Information Form: <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/customer-information-form/>
- We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/travel-insurance/>
- Choose a bicycle training program: <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/>
- Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/>

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- Refer to your Tour Packet/Itinerary to see step-by-step arrival and departure information for your tour, meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, along with other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.
- Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know if your trip is confirmed.
- Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.
- Begin your chosen training program
- Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail which we send 10 days prior to the due date for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie Lists: <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/>.
- Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists for suggestions, and see luggage limits at <https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/packing/>.
- We'll email you your access code to Digital Daysheets, Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders, emergency phone numbers, and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date. All this will be provided to you via a feature called Experiences via the RideWithGPS App (tracks available but not necessary for navigation on Classic, Expedition and Bike & Boat tours).

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on just in case. See you soon!