

Cycling holidays in Loire valley

Bo6-ST chateaus from Amboise to Saumur

Self-guided cycling tour (8 days & 7 nights) with accommodation in 2 or 3-star hotels and 1 dinner

Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrival at Amboise – Discovery of Clos Luce and Amboise chateaux.

The Clos Lucé castle, beautiful white and pink stone construction was the last home of Leonardo de Vinci. Invited to France by François I, the famous Italian artist stayed and worked there until his death. Let yourself be amazed by the genius of this visionary man while discovering the famous machines he drew and which were recreated under the patronage of IBM. Traverse this ancient town and its numerous alleys bordered by vintage houses and you will reach the Loire riverbank and its castle. Erected during the XV and XVI centuries, at the request of Charles VIII and François I, the Amboise Castle was the first regal mansion under the French Renaissance therefore hosting an exceptional furniture collection. Overlooking Amboise, the gardens offer one of the most beautiful landscapes of the Loire River. Bicycles delivery and adjustment at the hotel at 6:00 pm or in the next morning - *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Amboise.*



Day 2 –Chenonceau chateau and Amboise

25 km/16 miles circular ride – Through forest you will reach the Chenonceau castle. Erected on the Cher River, atop an old windmill's foundation, the chateau is a true illustration of the Renaissance era's architecture. A ladies castle according to French history since they supervised its construction embellished it and saved it from the French Revolution's damages. The castle is surrounded by a magnificent park and some beautiful French style gardens. It hosts a marvelous collection of vintage furniture from the Renaissance era, tapestries dating from the XVI and XVII centuries as well as some vintage master pieces. You leave the Cher banks to come back to Amboise through forests, vineyards and some lovely small valleys. You will discover the pagoda of Chanteloup

on the outskirts of Amboise. This Chinese style construction of a pure Louis XVI style was erected in 1775 and offers atop its 44 meters an imposing view of the Loire valley and the Amboise forest. It is the last testimony of the Duke of Choiseul's famous castle, destroyed in 1823 by a group of estate merchants who sold it away stone by stone! There you will enjoy old-fashioned outdoor activities or will take a romantic stroll by the 3 hectare pond. You reach Amboise and end this day with a discovery tour of the town which hosts several old houses and manors. The Town Hall Museum is housed by an ancient mansion built during late 1500's. There you may view some harmoniously displayed objects and documents, reminders of Amboise's rich past in a Renaissance setting. Virgin of the XIV century tapestries from Aubusson, King Louis Philip's furniture, testimonies from the Duke of Choiseul and few paintings from his castle. *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel in Amboise*

Day 3 –Montlouis and Vouvray vineyards – Visit of Tours

30 km/18 miles ride - the day starts with a ride through vineyards of Montlouis and Vouvray and along the Loire bank to reach Tours. Tours is a town of art and history. This ancient Gallo-Roman capital became Saint Martin's town during the IV century when the inhabitants begged him to be their bishop. A great builder, Saint Martin covered the Touraine grounds with churches and chapels. He also required the erection of the Marmoutier monastery on the North river bank of the Loire. During the V century, a basilica was erected above Saint Martin's tomb. Today, only two towers remain: the Charlemagne Tower and the Clock Tower. During the XV and XVI centuries, Tours became the capital of the French Kingdom. It enjoyed a true blossoming of art and architecture. It is the perfect place to stroll along alleys and small parks, around the Place Plumereau bordered by beautiful wooden houses, or in the cathedral district, which has begun construction in the XIII century and was not finished before the XVI century. You may visit the cloister Psalette which is located right next to it and the castle whose tower Tour de Guise is the only remains from the XIII century. Tours possesses beautiful museum: the Beaux Arts museum located in the ancient bishop or the archeological museum of Touraine region located in the beautiful Hôtel Guoin – true masterpiece from the Renaissance era. *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Tours*



Day 4 –Villandry and Azay le Rideau chateaux

30 or 38 km ride (18 or 24 miles) - You will leave Tours by the riverbanks, first the Loire river's then the Cher's, in order to reach Villandry passing by Savonnière's quaint little village. Villandry was erected around 1536 and is the last of the big castles built on the Loire riverbanks during the Renaissance era. The magnificent gardens of the Château de Villandry, reminder of the spirit of the gardens of the Renaissance, were restored at the beginning of the 20th Century by Dr. J. Carvallo, the owner since 1906. Trough countryside or following the Cher and Loire rivers' banks you will go to Azay le Rideau. Built on an island in the middle of the Indre River, the Azay-Le-Rideau castle was erected during François I's reign by a rich financier. It is one of the dwellings combining French castle charm to the Italian palaces' grace. The monumental staircase – which concentrates most of this rich décor – is the prestige centerpiece of this architecture. Rich person tapestries and pieces of furniture of XVI, XVII and XVIII centuries decorate the apartments of the castle. To the South and West, two ponds are laid out, reflecting facades. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Azay le Rideau*

Day 5 – Châteaux de Langeais, d'Ussé et Chinon.

42 km/26 miles ride – You will cross orchards for several kilometers to reach the Loire River. You will cross an unusual bridge over the Loire in order to reach Langeais, one of the oldest towns in the Touraine region, which is overlooked by its imposing castle. The later was built at the request of Louis XI, on the site of an ancient fortress which was destroyed during the 'Hundred Years War' and which the square donjon is the only remains. Nowadays, the castle is home to a beautiful Renaissance style furniture collection retracing the seigniorial life of the XV century and Renaissance era. Then you will follow Loire River's banks to come across Ussé where you may visit Sleeping Beauty's castle since it is said to have inspired Charles Perrault. Located on the edge of the Chinon forest, overlooking the Loire and Indre valleys, this castle seduces with its many roofs, small steeples, dormers and fire places which detach it from its green surroundings. The opened part of the castle is home to beautiful furniture as well as Flemish tapestries. The chapel, isolated in the park, is a perfect example of Renaissance style buildings. Magnificent gardens overlook the Indre valley. You will go to Chinon



through forests and vineyards - *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in the centre of Chinon.*



Day 6 – Chinon and the Royal abbey of Fontevraud,

0 km/13 miles ride – Let the day start by a quaint visit of Chinon, an ancient medieval city that is home to numerous remains from its rich past. Located atop a hillside overlooking the Vienne River, the castle spreads over 400 meters. True illustration of the Military art of the Middle Age, it is the product of additions and modifications spreading from the X to the XV century. This historical city has held on to ancient houses and few churches, which you may discover while strolling through its alleys. Then you will leave Chinon crossing the Vienne River to reach

Fontevraud and the famous abbey. It is among the vastest monastic ensembles of the Christian world. Founded in 1101 by Robert of Arbrissel, it quickly became famous by welcoming religious communities from different horizons, which, were placed under the authority of an abbess. Each community had its own covenant. The Abbey enjoyed the patronage of great protectors such as the Duke of Anjou and his descendants the Plantagenet, kings of England. The abbey houses the remains of Henri II, Alienor of Aquitaine and their son Richard the Lion Hearted. The French Revolution terminated the order in 1792 and part of the buildings was transformed into prisons until 1963. Since then, the site has been undergoing major restructuration work. You may visit the abbey, cloisters of Saint Mary and Saint Benoit, the dining hall as well as the kitchens (magnificent building) - *Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel in Fontevraud*

Day 7 –Candes St Martin, Montsoreau and Saumur

35 km/ 22 miles ride – You will leave Fontevraud cycling down through vineyards to Candes Saint Martin, a quaint village at the crossing point of Vienne and Loire River. There you may see a magnificent church dating from the XII and XIII centuries, built on the spot where Saint Martin passed away. You will then continue your stroll along the riverbank to admire the Montsoreau castle, an ancient stronghold built on the Loire riverbanks and modified during the XV century. You will then cycle to Saumur famous for its cavalry school and its wines. The Duke of Anjou ordered the building of a pleasure dwelling during the XIV century, based on a XIII century fortress. With its large windows, its Fleur de Lys ornate crenels, its main staircase with finely worked bays, the castle of Saumur is one of the rare standing examples of the civil princely architecture from late Middle Age. You may stroll down the ancient district between the castle and the bridge, along quaint alleys bordered by ancient houses. Return of bikes at the hotel at 6:00 pm - *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Saumur*



Day 8 - Saumur – end of the tour after breakfast

Season

From beginning of April to End of October. You start the tour the day you want

What's included

- 7 night accommodations in 2 or 3-star hotels with breakfast
- 1 dinner
- Rental of fully-equipped hybrid bike including helmet, pannier, lock, puncture repair kit, map wallet and a theft/accidental damage insurance
- transfer of luggage between hotels and guest houses
- Road book including cycling itineraries, detailed maps, information about sites to see, wineries and restaurants on route and Green Michelin tourist guide about Loire valley
- Bilingual emergency phone call support 7 days a week

Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the cycling tour area – Travel and bike liability insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks - Additional meals - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls,... are not included

Tour difficulty

No major difficulty. This tour is for everybody in good health. Rolling countryside with occasional hills or short ascents with low elevation gain (in vineyards for example) you cycle quiet country roads or sometimes gravel tracks that link chateaux and towns.

Getting there and away

By road: Amboise is sited by the A10 motorway (Exit 18 – Amboise)

By train: Direct trains from Paris-Austerlitz to Amboise (about 2 hours journey) or by TGV from Paris Montparnasse to St Pierre des Corps (4Km from Tours) or Tours and taxi transfer or train to Amboise (25 Km).
Trains from Saumur to Angers or Tours/St Pierre des Corps and TGV (fast trains) to Paris

Where park your car: free unguarded car park in Amboise . Back from Saumur to Amboise by train

