SENTIERS DE FRANCE

C261-ST Loire valley
from Orléans to Blois

The Loire River is a Queen loved by Kings

The Loire Valley has seen many of France's kings pass through its territories. Listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, it is one of the rare places in the world where one finds magnificent chateaux, mansions, churches and abbeys in such quantity, giving testimony to an intense and rich spiritual and cultural life, as well as an art de vivre that has continued throughout the centuries.

Just before Briare, the Loire stretches itself away from the last foothills of the Massif Central. The valley expands and the hills flatten. You have found yourself in the Loire Valley. The first royal residences rise before you : the Chateau de la Bussiere, with its magnificent garden; Gien and its chateau, now transformed into a hunting museum and famous for its earthenware ; the medieval fortress of Sully; Saint Benoît Abbey and Germigny-des-Pres church, one of the oldest churches in France. Here also lies Orleans, the city chosen by the Capetiens, the first kings of France, as the capitol of their kingdom.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at ORLEANS. You will spend the day touring the city, the Sainte Croix Cathedral, the renaissance-style Hotel Groslot, the home of Joan of Arc, the old neighborhoods of the city-center, and the beautiful floral park that stretches more than 35 hectares to the south of the city, close to the source of the Loiret River. *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel.*

Day 2 - CLERY-SAINT-ANDRE – BEAUGENCY (16 km). *Transfer by taxi from Orleans to Clery-Saint-Andre*. You will begin the day with a visit to the beautiful, gothic-style church of Notre-Dame-de-Clery, where Louis XI and his wife Charlotte de Savoie are buried. You will walk from there to the banks of the Loire to discover Meung-sur-Loire. You will visit the half-medieval- half-renaissance-style chateau, the collegiate church, the ancient ramparts and the mills in the centre of the old city. Finally, you will take again to the river, the misleading, nonchalant Loire, and follow it to Beaugency for the evening. *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel.*

Day 3 - BEAUGENCY and CHAMBORD. The morning will be spent in the lovely setting provided by the village of Beaugency. Wandering through the old neighborhoods, you will discover the history of the town, the keep, the house of the Templars, Notre-Dame Abbey, the Hotel-Dieu, and the old bridge. In the start of the afternoon, a taxi will bring you from Beaugency to Chambord, where you will visit the chateau and the residence, both of which were of great importance during the Renaissance in France. The chateau is the incarnation of the royal power of François I and Louis XIV. Transfer by taxi to Bracieux *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in the village of Bracieux*

Day 4 - CHEVERNY – CELLETTES (15 km). *Transfer by taxi to the chateau of Cheverny*, one of the best-known, which represents a unique uniformity of style. Built during the 17th century, it is richly decorated and houses a beautiful collection of furniture. After visiting the chateau and the park, you will move on to the chateau of Troussay, a manor house dating to the Renaissance, which today houses a museum on the Sologne. You will continue your hike to the chateau of Beauregard, once a property of François I. Be sure not to miss the Galerie des Illustres, a gorgeous collection of antique furniture and a rare 16th century kitchen. *Transfer by taxi from Cellettes, the city in which this chateau it located to Blois. Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel in Blois*

Day 5 - BLOIS. Visit of the city, the old neighborhoods, the imposing chateau which marries four very distinct architectural styles and houses the Musees des Beaux-Arts et Archeologie (museum), Saint Louis Cathedral and the numerous churches and gardens that decorate the city. *Lodging and breakfast in the same 2-star hotel.*

Day 6 - Visit of the chateaux of CHAUMONT SUR LOIRE and FOUGERES. *Escort by taxi to Chaumont.* Built on a raised promontory, the chateau of Chaumont sur Loire resembles more closely a medieval fortress than a renaissance residence. You will visit the historical part of the chateau, filled with antique furniture, the horse stables and the beautifully landscaped park. You may wish to wander along the banks of the Loire. A taxi will take you from Chaumont sur Loire to Fougeres sur Bievre, where you will visit the 15th century fortified castle. It's an odd one out in this area. It looks defensively medieval with its massed turrets and its inner courtyard enclosed on all four sides. Escort by taxi to Blois - *Lodging and breakfast in the same 2-star hotel.*

Day 7 - BLOIS. Tour ends after breakfast.

****

Season

From beginning of April to end of November

Including

- 6 nights in handpicked 2-star hotels
- 6 breakfasts – No dinner
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers as written in the tour decription
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with the route marked on and detailed route notes describing the trail.
- A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- Emergency assistance.

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

Getting there and away

By train: Scheduled trains from Paris-Austerlitz station to Orleans and from Blois to Paris-Austerlitz station
By car : Orleans is located at the A10 (Paris-Bordeaux) and A71 (Orleans-Clermont Ferrand) motorways connection
Where park your car : toll guarded car park in the centre of Orleans. Return journey from Blois to Orleans by train.

Walk difficulty

Grade 1 – This tour is easy. No walk more than 17 km (10.5 miles). You will walk 4 or 5 hours at relaxed pace and spend time at places of interest along the route. Walking experience is not necessary as distances are short and the terrain is gentle. Everybody can walk this tour