

# C107-ST Rabelais country



During this hike you will walk in Rabelais' footsteps, a native of this area. You will discover the famous spots of the pichropoline wars whose Gargantua, Gargamelle and other were the valorous heroes. In this area watered by Vienne River, a certain art de vivre is maintained, which combines good taste through its gastronomy and wines with Rabelais philosophy, which was defined by a joie de vivre, conviviality and tolerance. History of England and France is present everywhere and in prestigious sites as Fontevraud abbey or Chinon

## Itinerary

**Day 1** - Arrival in CHINON. Visit of the old city dominated by the medieval castle whose some parts dated back to the 17th C. The future king Charles VII has sought refuge in this town in 1418 during the Hundred Years and Joan of Arc came here to acknowledge him as leader. Take time to discover these narrow and twisty lanes, these old houses and the churches – *Night and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 2** - L'ILE BOUCHARD - CHINON (21 km). *Transfer by taxi from Chinon to l'île Bouchard* located on the banks of the Vienne river. This ancient harbour held a priory of which only a few remains are still standing on the first hillsides.. Don't leave the city without visiting the St Maurice and St Gilles churches. You'll walk along the Vienne river before walking through the vineyards up to the first slopes. Then you'll disappear into the forest before reaching the old little village of Cravant and its old church of which nave was built during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. You'll continue your journey and will walk through the Chinon forest until you reach Malvaut and then, Chinon, seeing Ste Radegonde chapel on the way. Hollowed in the rock, it holds a Romanesque frontage. This path, fringed with troglodytic houses offers very nice views of the Vienne valley and Chinon. You'll get into the city by Ste Maxime church and its imposing towers – *Night and breakfast in the same hotel*

**Day 3** - LA ROCHE CLERMAULT – FONTEVRAUD (16 km) *taxi transfer to the Deviniere* (house where Rabelais was born. He spent its childhood in Chinon). After the visit of this small farm and the adjacent museum, you'll follow in Gargantua's footsteps. Along the way, you'll admire Le Coudray-Montpensier castle before joining Seuilly where was located the abbey in which Rabelais grew up and where one of his heroes, Frère Jean des Entonneurs, lived. You'll cross the village of which main street is fringed of many troglodytic habitations before joining Lerné, a pleasant village with blond tufa houses. Sordid quarrels between the inhabitants of Seuilly and Lerné started these burlesque "pichropolines" wars. You'll walk up to the Chavigny castle and will cross Fontevraud forest by the small village of Crouziers until you reach the famous Fontevraud abbey, that you'll visit at the end of the afternoon. It was founded at the very beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and held different masculine and feminine religious communities which lead self-governing lives under an abbess leadership. *Dinner, night and breakfast in a 3-star hotel*



**Day 4 - FONTEVRAUD – MONTSOREAU (14 km)** You will spend the morning visiting the Fontevraud Abbey, one of the largest abbeys in France. Built at the beginning of the 12th century, the abbey has housed a number of religious communities, both masculine and feminine, who led autonomous lives under the direction of an abbess. The religious life of the abbey came to an end during the Revolution with the sacking of many of the buildings by Napoleon I, who then transformed them into prisons in 1804. The abbey was deconsecrated in 1963. You will leave the village and head through the vineyards for the banks of the Loire. The path crosses in front of the old windmill of La Herpiniere and descends towards the troglodytic village of Turquant. You will move on to Montsoreau and the chateau which now houses a museum dedicated to the colonial history of France – *Night and breakfast in the same hotel.*



**Day 5 - FONTEVRAUD – CHINON (19 km)** You will walk along the river to reach Candes-St-Martin, a charming village located at the confluence of the Loire and Vienne rivers. The 12th century church was built on the very spot where Saint Martin died. You'll walk up to the top of the hillside to discover a gorgeous beauty spot and a nice view of the junction of the Loire and the Vienne. You'll then move down and walk through fields and across small hamlets to reach the banks of the Vienne river that you will follow to Chinon – *Night and breakfast in a 2-star-hotel.*

**Day 6 - CHINON -** End of the tour after breakfast

## Season

From middle of April to end of October but be careful this area is very crowded in summer time and we recommend you (if you can) to come outside this period. Nevertheless this area attracts a lot of tourists and you have to reserve earlier to get the best rooms.

## What's included?

- 5 nights' accommodation in selected 2 or 3 star hotels
- 6 breakfasts – 1 dinner
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers : Chinon-l'Île Bouchard, Chinon-La Devinière
- A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with 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:** Several trains a day from Paris Montparnasse with change at St Pierre des Corps or Tours.

**By car:** A10 motorway from Paris to Tours –exit Tours sud and D751 road to reach Chinon

**Where to park:** free car parks in Chinon

## Walk difficulty

**Grade 2** - walks of 4 to 6 hours a day. Some stages could be more 20 km (13/15 miles) and rolling uplands, ascents mainly gradual than steep of up to 500 m. An average level of fitness or some experience with walking is recommended.