

# C260-CO Loire valley

## from Briare to Orléans



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-Prés church, one of the oldest churches in France. Here also lies Orleans, the city chosen by the Capetians, the first kings of France, as the capitol of their kingdom.

## Itinerary

**Day 1** - Arrival at BRIARE. This town where the water is everywhere is marked by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It's best-known for the Pont-Canal, a bridge built by Gustave Eiffel's company to carry a canal over the Loire River and for the Musée de la Mosaïque et des Emaux (museum), that shows wares produced by the mosaic factories of the town. You'll see the Port de plaisance (marina) in the center of the town and the St Etienne church covered with mosaics – Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel

**Day 2** - CHATEAU of BUSSIERE – BRIARE (15 km). Transfer by taxi to La Bussiere. You will tour the chateau, a magnificent, 18<sup>th</sup> century structure that rises from the banks of a pond and is still inhabited by a family. The chateau houses a fresh-water fishing museum and a wonderful vegetable garden. After the visit, you will head out for Briare, passing by the chateau and the pond of Pont-Chevron and following the canal of Briare. During your visit of the town you will see Briare's famous bridge-canal, its port and charming city-center.

*Lodging and breakfast in the same 4-star hotel*

**Day 3** - BRIARE – GIEN (7 km). You'll leave the town crossing the Loire on the Pont-Canal heading to the village of St Firmin. You'll walk on the heights through hamlets, crossing some woods and meadows to reach St Brisson. This old village sits at the base of a medieval chateau built straight above an ancient arm of the Loire. It was transformed into a residence during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. You will hike back to Gien by way of the village of Saint Martin sur Ocre. The afternoon will be spent touring Gien and its many treasures, including the chateau which houses the Musée International de la Chasse (museum dedicated to the art and history of hunting), and the Musée de la Faïencerie (Gien's famous pottery), where you will learn the history of the Manufacture de Gien since 1821 and see many examples of the fine art of these pieces - Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel





**Day 4 - OUZOUEUR SUR LOIRE – SULLY SUR LOIRE** (11 km). Transfer by taxi from Gien to Ouzouer sur Loire. From the village, you will walk down to the banks of the Loire River and follow these majestic waters to Sully sur Loire. You will spend the afternoon visiting the chateau, a gorgeous example of a medieval fortress, with its high towers and deep moat. You will climb to the heights of the keep and admire the vaulted framework of the tower's interior, a masterpiece of apprenticeship. You will visit the city which has lovely churches and Renaissance homes.  
*Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel*

**Day 5 –SAINT BENOIT SUR LOIRE – CHATEAUNEUF SUR LOIRE** (14 km). Transfer by taxi to St Benoit in the morning. You will visit the Fleury Abbey, with its bell-tower and choir loft, which help to make it one of the most beautiful gems of the Loire Valley. You will leave this charming village by the banks of the river to arrive at Germigny des Pres and its Carolingian

oratory, one of the oldest sanctuaries still standing in France, and decorated by a magnificent 11<sup>th</sup> century mosaic. You will then arrive in Chateaufort sur Loire, where the summer chateau lies largely in ruins but the stables have been completely restored and now house the very interesting Musee de la Marine de Loire. Transfer by taxi to Orleans - *Lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel in Orleans*

**Day 6 - ORLEANS.** You will enjoy touring the city of Orleans, the Cathedrale Saint Croix, the Renaissance-style Hôtel Grosloir, the home of Joan of Arc, the old neighborhoods of the city-center and the fantastic floral park that stretches more than 35 hectares to the south of the city, near the source of the Loiret River. *Lodging and breakfast in the same 4-star hotel*

**Day 7 - ORLEANS.** Tour ends after breakfast.

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## Season

From beginning of April to end of November

## Including

- 6 nights in handpicked 3 and 4-star hotels with breakfasts
- 1 gourmet dinner in Briare (day 1) - Several restaurants in cities where you stay.
- Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- Taxi transfers as written in the tour description
- 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 Gare de Lyon and Briare et Briare, and between Orleans and Paris Gare d'Austerlitz for return journey.

**By car:** Go to Orleans along the A10 motorway. Then follow the N60 and the D952 road to Briare. You can also take the A6 motorway from Paris and continue along the A77 motorway to Briare.

**Where park your car:** free toll unattended car park in Briare but it's difficult and long to come back from Orleans to Briare.

## Walk difficulty

**Grade 1** – This tour is easy. 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