

# C263-ST Loire valley

## from Chinon to Angers



*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.

In the midst of a reputable vineyard, and plunging into the waters of the river Vienne, lies the fortified city of Chinon. Here, in the territory of Rabelais, one celebrates the art of living well and eating well. During your journey, you will visit Usse and its splendid chateau, with its thousands of pinnacle turrets and skylight windows, you will think you are living a fairy tale. You will then move on to the famous Fontevraud Abbey and the chateau of Montsoreau on the banks of the Loire. You will leave the valley long enough to visit the

chateaux of Montreuil-Bellay and Breze and then return to the Loire to find the city of Saumur, famous for the chateau and the equestrian school of Le Cadre Noir. Your journey will end at Angers, in the presence of its chateau, cathedral and old neighborhoods.

## 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 - *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 2** - USSE – CHINON (17 km). *Transfer by taxi to Rigny-Usse in the morning.* The chateau of Usse is remarkable in its beauty, unique in its roofing, thousands of pinnacle turrets, chimneys, and skylights. After having visited the chateau and admiring the magnificent cedars of the park, you will cross through the national forest of Chinon and the vineyards and arrive again in Chinon *Lodging and breakfast in the same 2-star hotel*

**Day 3** - LE RIVAU – CHINON (14 km). *A taxi will bring you to the steps of the 13th century feudal chateau of Le Rivau for your visit.* After the tour, you will walk to the banks of the Vienne River and to Chinon. Strolling through the city, you will discover in turn the chateau, Old Chinon, Le Grand Carroi and the many old homes and churches. At the end of the day a taxi will escort you to Fontevraud for the night. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel at Fontevraud*

**Day 4** - FONTEVRAUD – CANDES SAINT MARTIN (16 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 Herpinierie 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. You will then arrive in Candes Saint 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. *Return by taxi to Fontevraud. Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same 2-star hotel*



**Day 5** - MONTREUIL BELLAY – BREZE – SAUMUR (12 km). *Transfer by taxi to Montreuil-Bellay, an imposing structure situated in a pleasant spot on the banks of the Thouet river, which hides within its walls lovely gardens, and a beautiful collection of furniture. You will leave the village and follow the Thouet Valley to Breze and its chateau. In the depths of the chateau, in the subterranean halls, one finds a fortress and a lordly medieval residence. At the end of the day, a taxi will bring you to Saumur where you will visit the old neighborhoods of the city and the Saint Pierre and Notre-Dame-de-Nantilly churches - Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 6** - SAUMUR and ANGERS. The morning will begin with a visit of the chateau of Saumur, a squat fortress that overlooks the Loire Valley. Inside you will find several museums, including that of Les Arts Decoratifs, offering a beautiful ensemble of Medieval and Renaissance art. *Escort by taxi from Saumur to Angers. In Angers you will visit the old parts of the city and see beautiful old homes and the Saint Maurice Cathedral that dates to the 12th and 13th centuries - Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel*

**Day 7** - ANGERS. You will spend the morning touring the chateau, a feudal fortress built by Saint Louis at the start of the 13th century. You will find there the Tenture de l'Apocalypse. Tour ends late morning.



\*\*\*\*\*

## Season

From beginning of April to end of November

## Including

- 6 nights in handpicked 2-star hotels
- 6 breakfasts – 2 dinners
- 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:* Trains from Paris Montparnasse station to Chinon with a connection at ST Pierre des Corps TGV station. Direct trains from Angers to Paris

*By car :* A10 motorway (Paris-Bordeaux) from Paris - exit Tours Sud 18 and continue to Chinon along the D751 road

*Where park your car:* free toll unattended car park in Chinon. Return journey from Angers to Chinon with a connection at Tours.

## 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