

Self drive holidays

SD02 Most beautiful chateaus in Loire valley

5-day & 4-night tour



Itinerary

Day 1 – Arrival at Blois and visit of the chateaux of:

Blois the Royal château combines four distinct wings around a single courtyard, each one corresponding to a distinct period and style, forming a unique panorama of French architecture.

Chambord, the peak of Renaissance art

Cheverny, ranking among the most beautiful of Loire castles, it houses an outstanding collection of furnishings, tapestries and painting masterpieces

Day 2 - visit of the chateaus of:

Chaumont sur Loire, former fortified castle dominating the Loire River.

Chenonceau. Château des Dames as recorded in the French history books, Chenonceau owes a large part of its charm to women. Chenonceau is not only remarkable for its architecture and history but also for the fine quality of its collections.

Discovery tour of **Amboise** to see:

The **chateau of Amboise** ranks among Gothic and Renaissance architectural masterpieces that houses a collection of furnishing from these two periods. Leonardo Da Vinci, who spent his last few years in Amboise, rests in the castle's St Hubert chapel, a fine example of flamboyant Gothic architecture

The **manor house of Clos-Lucé**, in which Leonardo da Vinci spent his last years

The **Pagode de Chanteloup**, a charming "chinoiserie pagoda" built in the late 18th century at the edge of the forest

Day 3 - visit of the chateaus of:

Visit of the **chateau of Villandry** it was completed towards 1536 and was the last of the large chateaux built on the banks of the Loire during the Renaissance. The present day gardens which are in complete harmony with the Renaissance architecture of the chateau are now the castle's source of renown.

The **chateau of Azay Le Rideau** is one of the loveliest in the Loire. Built on an island in the middle of Indre River, in a romantic park, the chateau preserves a remarkable unity of style : a perfect combination of traditional elements and Italicism.

The Chateau of Ussé, the most romantic and fanciful of all the Loire Châteaux, is said to have given Charles Perrault, the 17th C writer of fairytales, the idea of the castle of the Sleeping Beauty. The Château was built in stages between the 15th and 17th centuries, and shows a mingling of Late Gothic and Renaissance features.

Langeais. If this 15C powerful medieval fortress bears the outer characteristic features of defensive buildings (drawbridge, sturdy towers...), its inner façade already heralds Renaissance. The grounds house the oldest square donjon in France. In each of its rooms, you will discover a meticulously reconstructed 15C interior full of exquisite pieces of furniture, objects of art, and exceptional Gothic and Renaissance tapestries.

Day 4 – the royal abbey of Fontevraud, Montreuil Bellay and Chinon

Visit of the **Fontevraud abbey**. Founded around 1101, Fontevraud was one of the largest monasteries in the West. The order had both a community of men and a community of women, and had the distinction of being under the authority of a woman. The abbey church contains the wonderful polychrome recumbent tomb figures of Henri II Plantagenet and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, of their first son Richard the Lionhearted, and of Isabelle of Angouleme. At the French Revolution, the abbey was the richest and the most powerful abbey in the kingdom.

Overlooking the beautiful River Thouet, **Montreuil-Bellay** is the last fortified town in Anjou, retaining almost all of its medieval walls. The earliest fortifications date back to the early 11th century, the present château buildings having been added in the 13th to 15th centuries. The neighboring collegiate church, nowadays the parish church, also dates from the 15th century.

Chinon was an important medieval town and many buildings (three churches and numerous ancient houses of timber, brick, and tufa stone.) from that period are preserved. Its castle, overlooking the river, consists of three distinct fortresses built from the 11th to the 15th C by the kings of England and France. In the Château du Milieu in 1429 Joan of Arc presented herself to Charles VII of France and correctly identified him although he was disguised. In La Devinière, a nearby hamlet, stands the house where the poet Rabelais was born.

Day 5 - Tour of Saumur and Angers

Saumur is a beautiful town with a magnificent **chateau** overlooking the river Loire. It is one of the rare chateaux that displays 14th century architecture, what came at the end of the middle Ages and before the Renaissance. In the 16th century, when the castle became a Protestant stronghold, the palace was fortified with buttresses and the like. The town still has old buildings dating back to the Middle Ages and two attractive churches, St Pierre and N.D. de Nantilly.

Angers, the capital of the historic province of Anjou, is considered one of the most beautiful cities in France.

Chateau of Angers is an imposing medieval fortress surrounded by a kilometre-long wall studded with 17 circular towers. It houses some historic buildings and a specially built modern glass gallery for one of the great masterpieces of medieval tapestry, the **Tenture de l'Apocalypse**. 168 m/550ft long and 5 m/16ft wide, it originally consisted of seven parts, of which 70 complete scenes have survived. The theme is the Revelation of St John. Top sights include the intriguing museum, **Musée Jean Lurçat**, which is known for its famous tapestry Le Chant du Monde, and the **St Maurice Cathedral** with its beautiful 12C nave and famous stained-glass windows, also dating from the 12C

Rental car drop off in late afternoon

End of the tour

More details and tips

The car - You can do this tour with your own car or with a rental car (not included in the price).

We can get a rental car for you (Please contact us)

Hotels - On this tour, we suggest you to stay in hotels of different categories.

Prestige Self drive holidays SD02-P – 4 or 5-star hotels

Luxe Self drive holidays SD02-L – 4-star hotels

Comfort Self drive holidays SD02-C – 3-star hotels

Standard Self drive holidays Standard SD01-ST – accommodation in 2-star family-run hotels handpicked for you and very often listed in Tourist French guides as Red Michelin or Gault et Millau guides

Price includes

- 7 nights on B&B basis in hotels handpicked by us among the best.
- Parking fees if the hotel has one (only for Prestige and Luxe tours)
- The detailed road book with the GPS waypoints of the main landmarks, villages, attractions and hotels. It also contains maps of cities you will explore. (see below for more details)
- IGN maps of the area (scale 1 cm = 1 km)
- Green Michelin guide (tour guide) of the region
- Emergency phone number available 24/24 and 7/7

Not including

- trip to the departure city of the self-drive tour
- Lunches and dinners (except if written in the tour description)
- Entrances fees to the different tourist sites
- Personal expenses...

Starting and ending cities of tours

Tours start and end in cities or airports where you can easily pick up or return a rental car.

Tours start in the morning of the first day, often with a visit to the city. We recommend you to arrive the day before in the afternoon to better recover from your trip from home.

Tours end in the late afternoon in the last city or airport.

We can book a room for you for the night before or for the last day.

Getting from and away

By car - Take the A6 motorway (Paris-Lyon) from Paris. Continue on A77 motorway after Nemours. Exit 19 and go along D940 to Gien.

By train – Direct trains from Paris Bercy to Gien (5 or 6 trains a day, about 1.30 hours' journey). Only one car rental agency in Gien (Europcar)

By plane – the nearest international airport is Paris Charles de Gaulle where you will rent a car to drive to Gien (about 2 hours)

You can drop off rental car in Angers. TGV trains (fast trains) from Angers to Paris

Other services

On request we can offer this tour with accommodation in charming B&B (manors, private chateaux, stylish villas...)