

Loire Valley

10 SUGGESTED ITINERARIES THROUGH CHÂTEAUX COUNTRY



“Château” your illusions
Visit the Loire Valley Region
2006



Région Centre

FRANCE

Let us guide you

You will find practical information on all the sites mentioned, plus some others, in the “Mon Voyage” section.

1 From “Grandiose” Maintenon Castle to “Petite” Picassiette House

This itinerary runs from Beauce to Perche, and you can find big cats, a cathedral, and even Proust, on the way!

2 From Castles to Caves

This trip through the Loir Valley is an architectural delight. You can visit the amazing troglodyte caves – authentic homes carved out of rock-faces, and then go on to visit glorious hillside châteaux.

3 From the night time tours of Bourges to the Witchcraft of Concessault Museum

This itinerary is fired by the flames of potters’ kilns and witches cauldrons – you will also warm to the cuisine on the way.

4 From the sumptuous residence of Sully-sur-Loire to the Exotic Butterflies of the La Source Floral Park

This itinerary uncovers the many facets of the Loire - modern in Briare, historic in Sully, and artistic in Gien.

5 From Chambord to Poaching, see them both in a new light

On this trail, you will find man and nature working in perfect harmony, with unusual results.

6 From Villandry’s Renaissance gardens to the towering Pagoda of Chanteloup

Sharks, fairy-tale châteaux, and an Italian genius: expect the unexpected on these Loire riverbanks!

7 From Rabelaisian Chinon Castle to the utopian town of Richelieu

From a charming village to Gargantuan vegetable gardens, from a quadrilaterally-planned town to the fortress of a medieval king: welcome to Rabelais country!

8 From Azay-le-Rideau Castle to George Sand’s Home

Combine a history lesson with a tour through hunting country.

9 From the Brenne Natural Regional Park to the Haute-Touche Nature Reserve

From the land of a thousand lakes to the Secrets of the Red Sea, this itinerary takes you through the Brenne Natural Regional Park.

10 From the “Chateau des Dames” in Chenonceau to Notre Dame of Orsan Priory

Straight to the heart of the Cher Valley, with its hidden treasures of stunning architecture and beautiful gardens.



You'll be pleasantly surprised

From “Grandiose” Maintenon Castle to “Petite” Picassiette House

This itinerary runs from Beauce to Perche, and you can find big cats, a cathedral, and even Proust, on the way!

1 Anet

Dogs chasing deer in a day's hunting? You are of course in Diane de Poitiers territory- a hunting fanatic. The best architects of the era worked on Anet Castle, a castle which bears witness to its past splendour, despite being damaged during the Revolution.

2 Dreux

Perched on a hill overlooking the town, the **neo-gothic royal chapel** has protected the burial grounds of Orléans since Louis-Philippe. Go inside to admire the stained glass and carved statues. Not only does Dreux's history merit the detour so does its atmosphere - in December the “**Festival des Flambarts**” raises the temperature with its carnival style parade and richly coloured street entertainment.

3 Maintenon

This **old feudal castle** was transformed in the 17th century. Its floors were designed by Lenôtre, it has a 17th century aqueduct and golf course alongside the grounds. Such a jewel was needed to satisfy Louis XIV's future mistress better known as Madame de Maintenon. Crossing the grounds, the aqueduct's arches are reminders of the monumental project that was supposed to join the waters of the Eure near Marly and Versailles Castle.

4 Pierres

Colours, odours and tastes are intertwined in **Clos de Bois Richeux Medieval Gardens**. A very special botanical heritage composed of herb gardens with medicinal plants, aromatic inner courtyards, and vegetable gardens of very old varieties. Enough to rejuvenate medieval spirituality...

5 Auneau

Whether they mew or growl the **cats of Auneau** leap around in a natural habitat. You can observe very rare species from observation points along the magnificent pathway, in the heart of the castle's grounds.

6 Chartres

The **cathedral** is a masterpiece and listed UNESCO heritage site. The spires of this 12th and 13th century gem can be seen across the “beauceronne” countryside. The **International Centre of Stained Glass Windows** increases the influence of the art of stained glass through training courses and exhibitions. The **School of Agriculture** houses the largest French museum dedicated to agriculture in an engine shed built in 1905. There are more than 100 exceptional agriculture machines on show, live, interactive temporary exhibitions and a multimedia area. It took Raymond Isidore 33 years to decorate and cover his home with coloured mosaics, including all of the furniture!

The **Maison Picassiette** merits its listed building status.

7 Illiers-Combray

Go in search of lost time “à la recherche du temps perdu” in Illiers-Combray. Here you will find Aunt Léonie's home, the **Marcel Proust Museum** and the charming Pré Catelan garden created by the author's uncle that became Swann's Park in Proust's novel. Immerse yourself in the pastoral, nostalgic ambience of one of France's most famous writers.

8 Nogent-le-Rotrou

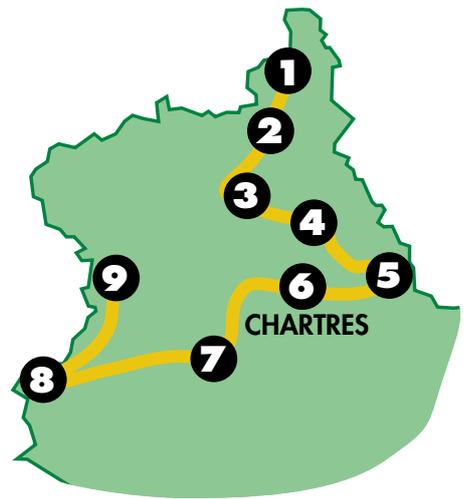
St Jean Stately Home and Perche Museum, 1000 years old, rises above the Huisne valley.

If testimonies from the past fascinate, the rich history of Perche and the stately home can be found in a converted museum in the heart of its old stone walls.

One of the “**most beautiful detours de France**”, Nogent-le-Rotrou merits a stop.

9 Perche

The **Natural Regional Park of Perche**, lies between Beauce and Normandy. Ideal for long walks through a landscape of small valleys and farmland, criss-crossed by hedges and trees. A rich rural architecture built from a variety of natural materials that produce an amazing palette of colours enhances the façades of the manor houses and churches, farms and abbeys. From nature's perspective, you will be spoilt as you wind your way from one green valley to another and discover a countryside where the horse is king. And to learn more, visit the Park's Visitors' Centre, situated in Nocé in the neighbouring region.



What's on

► **Chartres International Organ Festival.**
Free concerts in Notre Dame Cathedral.
From 25/6 to 27/8.
Tel: +331 45 48 31 74 or +332 37 18 26 26.

► **Summer Evening Entertainment in Chartres.**
Free Summer Festival: concerts, street music every Tuesday, organ recitals in the cathedral every Thursday and theatre performances every Saturday
From 24/6 to 19/8. Jazz week from 3/7 to 8/7.
Tel: +332 37 18 26 26.

► **Chartres European Accordion Festival.**
Classical music concerts from around the world including jazz. Exhibitions open from 2/6 to 4/6.
Tel: +332 37 28 38 71.

► **Chartres and Eure-et-Loir Opera Festival:**
operatic events co-ordinated by Eve Ruggieri, with concerts in prestigious buildings, shows and seminars. September.
Tel: +332 37 30 98 68.

► **“Chartres – In good voice”**
Festival celebrating song in its different guises throughout the world.
Several concerts in December.
Tel: +332 37 18 26 26.

► **“Eté Sous les Charms” Festival. Dreux.**
Free concerts: jazz, blues, world music... From 16/7 to 27/8.
Tel: +332 37 46 01 73 and +332 37 38 87 00.

► **“Fête des Flambarts” in Dreux.**
A festival to celebrate the winter solstice. Parades with fireworks.
Mid-December.
Tel: +332 37 46 01 73 or +332 37 38 87 00.

► **The Perche Spring Music Festival** takes place in different churches across the region.
From 30/4 to 18/6.
Tel: +332 33 25 70 10.

From Castles to Caves

This trip through the Loir Valley is an architectural delight. You can visit the amazing troglodyte caves – authentic homes carved out of rock-faces, and then go on to visit glorious hillside châteaux.

1 Châteaudun

In Châteaudun, one of the “**Most beautiful detours of France**”, don’t be deceived by appearances. Its **château** looks like a fort dominated by an imposing 12th century keep but hides a comfortable residence of harmoniously mixed gothic and Renaissance styles. An original “**mise-en-scène**” based on the theme of “**Cuisine, a life style in the Middle-Ages**” will familiarise you with the festive cookery traditions of the 15th century princes.

2 Montigny-le-Gannelon

The **château** was restored in the 19th century and is still inhabited. It sits on top of a hill overlooking the River Loir. You can see souvenirs from the post-Napoleonic era during your visit which combines the history of France with the history of the family. The **château’s** cliff is full of more discreet troglodyte homes.

3 Arville

The **Commandery of the order of the Knights of Arville**, the best preserved of all, is a unique composition. Discover the era of the crusader and their Knights through the brand new, interactive **Museum of the Order of the Knights**. During a guided tour, take in life during this period by visiting the tithe barns, the garret, the church and the bread oven.

4 Vendôme

Vendôme, a “**Town of Art and History**”, was the birth place of the **Marquis of Rochambeau**, liberator of America. Balzac also stayed here when he was a child. The contrasting architecture of **Trinity Abbey** will surprise you with its austere beautiful roman belfry and the **Abbey’s** exuberantly decorated facade. In July and August you can discover Vendôme by boat along the River Loir.

5 Thoré-la-Rochette

The **Loir Valley train** takes you along its 36km of restored tracks with several stops on route. Gourmets can enjoy local specialities at the station on their return.

6 Sasnières

The 3 hectare **Garden of the Domaine de Sasnières** has been designed as a small green valley with a peaceful, fresh water pond by a gardener that is passionate about plants and botany.

7 Lavardin

One of the “**Most Beautiful Villages of France**”, the village of Lavardin is a charming place to stop, with its troglodyte dwellings on the hillside and bridge over the River Loir. You can still visit the remains of its fort, and keep which overlook the Loir. Go inside St Genest Church and marvel at its remarkable murals before wandering amongst the beautiful old homes.

8 Montoire-sur-le-Loir

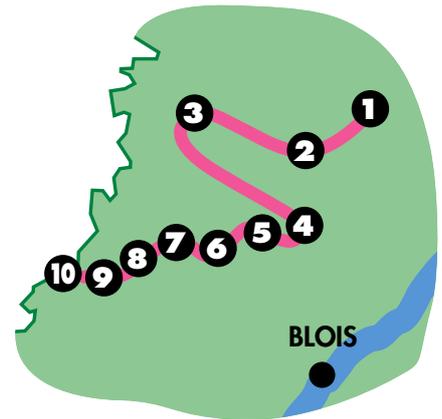
The “**Musikenfete**” involves 500 traditional musical instruments from all over the world, some of which you can try out whether you are a musician or just a beginner. The first Sunday of the month, the **Museum’s Music Demonstration** presents music from a specific country. Since 1973 the Montoire Festival has represented the different cultures of the world through the top amateur dance troops and classical orchestras.

9 Trôo

The **troglodyte village** of Trôo exhibits the different aspects of underground life: the galleries, medieval underground shelter, or an old-fashioned tufa quarry. “**Man and his knife**” and “**the children of Trôo**” recount the unique aspects of life in an ancient troglodyte habitat.

10 Couture-sur-Loir

Possonnière Manor House near Montoire-sur-le-Loir witnessed the birth of one of France’s most prominent literary figures **Pierre de Ronsard**. He spent the first twelve years of his life in this residence inspired by the Italian Renaissance. The poet certainly owes part of his artistic talent to the gentle harmony of its surroundings.



What's on

► Medieval Cuisine in Châteaudun Château.

A theatrical tour evokes through images, sound and smells, the cuisine and lifestyle of the Middle Ages. From 1/4 to 1/11.
Tel: +332 37 94 02 90.

► Montoire Festival of Folklore from around the world. Montoire-sur-le-Loir.

400 artists from Scotland, Russia, Australia (Aboriginals), Brazil...
From 6/8 to 15/8.
Tel: +332 54 85 35 16.

► Vendôme Summer Performances.

In the cloister: songs, plays, stories and dances. Free. In July and August.
Tel: +332 54 77 05 07.

► “Rockomotives” - Vendôme.

A festival of modern music that welcomes nationally and internationally renowned groups. End october.
Tel: +332 54 77 06 92.

► Regional Images - Vendôme Film Festival.

This festival gives young talent, actors and producers, a chance to be discovered thanks to its national and European short film competitions. Beginning December.
Tel: +332 54 67 09 82.

From the night time tours of Bourges to the Witchcraft of Concessault Museum

This itinerary is fired by the flames of potters' kilns and witches cauldrons - you will also warm to the cuisine on the way.

1 Nançay

Discover the modern art of the Capazza Gallery, and you will never look at modern art in the same light again. It is next door to the "radioastronomy station" of Nançay, the "Open Skies Centre", which opens up the galaxy to you. Exhibitions, planetarium, observation points and guided tours will send enthusiasts of all ages into orbit. Climb the trees in the Adventure Park, and walk through the air in the heart of a six-hectare forest where you will find a circuit adapted to every age and ability.

2 Aubigny-sur-Nère

Aubigny Château is located between Sologne and Berry. The château entrance and turrets are centuries old. The museum of the Old Scottish Alliance tells the fascinating story of how the city became linked with the House of Stuart. However, it is the whole town centre that is worth the detour and in particular its adorable timbered houses built in the 15th century after a terrible fire had ravaged the town.

3 Blancfort

An old strong house, Blancfort Château will delight you with its pink brick, its garden "à la française", galleries and arcades. Go inside this noble domain to admire Aubusson tapestries and 17th and 18th century furniture.

4 Oizon

The enchanting, Renaissance Verrerie Château was built by the Stuarts. Its decor inspired the writer Alain Fournier for the interiors of the Grand Meaulnes. Situated on the Jacques Cœur route, you can see the château's reflection in the lake, which goes right up to the foot of its turrets

5 Concessault

Toad spittle and spider legs become invincible enemies when you enter the world of Black magic at the Museum of Witchcraft. Learn about its history and arm yourself with the worst spells.

6 La Borne/Henrichemont Foëcy / Mehun-sur-Yèvre

This is where you will find both the Talbot Family and the Bulgarian Ivanoff signatures on old and new ceramics. Visit the Ivanoff workshops in the outbuildings converted into a museum. You can also visit the pottery museum in the village chapel where you will find the work of potters over the years. Today

you only need to wander through Borne village near Henrichemont to come across potters, sculptors and ceramic artists at work. Borne, has become the true pottery capital and owes its prosperity and international reputation to "fired clay". To find out all about porcelain production and decoration, do not miss Foëcy's Living Museum of Porcelain, set up by Philippe Deshoulières, a descendant of a long line of potters. Last but not least pass by the Porcelain Centre - Charles VII Museum in Mehun-sur-Yèvre, one of "The Most Beautiful Detours of France".

7 Neuvy-Deux-Clochers

This cathedral without a roof is a surprising work of art. An example of modern architecture designed by Jean Linard and a composition of juxtaposed, luminous fragments of mirrors and ceramics.

8 Sancerre

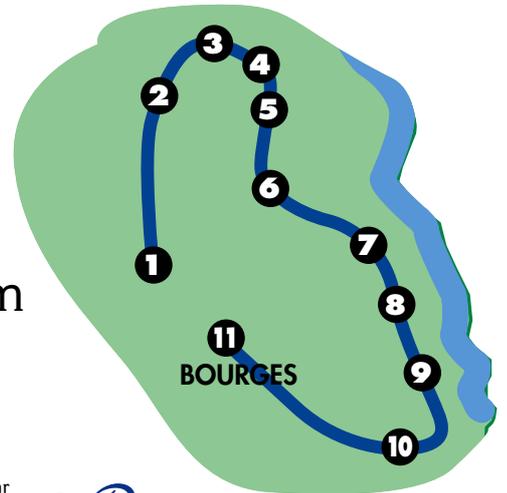
One of the "Most beautiful Detours of France", Sancerre is above all known for its vineyards whose reputation of excellence speaks for itself. Visit the town, perched on top of a rocky hill, and you will immediately be charmed by the small streets and harmonious layout of the area. In the town centre, visit the Maison des Sancerre, where winegrowers will welcome you and show you the thousand and one facets of this wine area. There will always be time to sample a "Crottin de Chavignol", local goat's cheese, accompanied by a glass of Sancerre.

9 Apremont-sur-Allier

Just three good reasons to come to Apremont: the floral park inspired by the English garden, the old fort remodelled in the 19th century and still crowned with 5 towers, and the old village of sailors and quarrymen in charming shell pink houses. Apremont, one of the "Most Beautiful Villages of France", lies on the River Allier flood plains.

10 Chassy

The charming Villiers Château garden lies between a vast man-made lake (which reflects a 16th century windmill) and an end of the 15th century manor house. This is the domain of clematis and perennial plants, a botanical collection of lilacs, rose garden and children's games.



11 Bourges

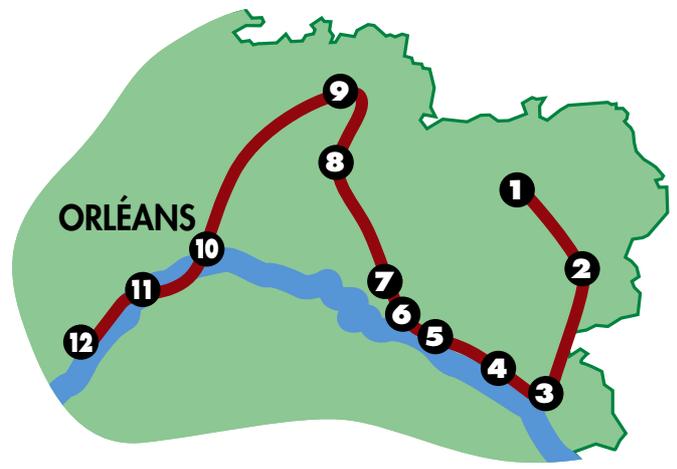
The sumptuous St Etienne Cathedral is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is well worth climbing its 396 steps to contemplate the magnificent view of the old town. Jacques Cœur's Palace, commissioned by Charles VII's Master of the Mint is a gothic masterpiece and reminiscent of the splendours of bygone times. Bourges, a "Town of Art and History" can also be visited at night, by following the spectacular, lit-up night walk. The accolades of hard work are celebrated in the Museum of the Best Workers of France, a historic representation of "savoir-faire".

What's on

- ▶ **The Franco-Scottish Games** in Aubigny-sur-Nère. Historical themed shows, medieval market, various performances. Mid-July
Tel: +332 48 81 50 07.
- ▶ **The Medieval Games in Bannegon** include horse tournaments, falconry demonstrations, an animated tour of the castle, artisan workshops, children's shows, troubadours... From 12/8 to 13/8.
Tel: +332 48 61 85 20.
- ▶ **Bourges Spring Music**
Festival of modern music is from 26/4 to 1/5.
Tel: +332 48 27 28 29.
- ▶ **The Illuminated Nights of Bourges** are free, independent night-time tours of the medieval town which is bathed in light, images and sound. From May to September. Tel: +332 48 23 02 60.
- ▶ **Summer in Bourges.** Free outdoor performances: classical concerts, songs from around the world and traditional music, and other music. From 21/6 to 21/9.
Tel: +332 48 24 93 32.
- ▶ **Enriching hours of Organ Music in Berry.** Organ concerts in St Etienne Cathedral in Bourges. From 18/7 to 22/8.
Tel: +332 48 20 57 66.
- ▶ **The Witches Fair in Bué-en-Sancerre** is a folklore fête, of evening entertainment and country cooking. 6/08. Tel: +332 48 54 06 61.
- ▶ **The Festival of Boucard, Le Noyer.** Four concerts held in the château annexes and the Jars-Le Noyer Church. From 10/7 to 31/7.
Tel: +332 48 73 88 32.

From the sumptuous residence of Sully-sur-Loire to the Exotic Butterflies of the La Source Floral Park

This itinerary uncovers the many facets of the Loire : modern in Briare; historic in Sully, and artistic in Gien.



1 Montargis

Its 128 bridges, footbridges and canal streets have given Montargis the nickname of the **Venice of Gâtinais**. The Briare, Loing and Orléans canals which feed into it, offer a variety of walks, from which you can admire beautiful half timbered houses leaning over the water in a more rural than urban setting.

2 Nogent-sur-Vernisson

You will find the most beautiful collection of trees in Europe at the **Barres Aboretum**. A guided tour gives you the chance to touch, smell and "listen" to the many species. Try the **Tree Climbing®** where you can enjoy flying between the earth and the sky - revive your childhood memories.

3 Briare

No doubt you have heard of the Eiffel Tower, but did you know that its famous engineer 'inspired' rather than 'conceived' other stupefying feats of engineering. The **magnificent canal bridge** that crosses the Loire is the longest in Europe and a perfect example. Don't miss the **pleasure port**, a highlight of river tourism and Mantelot Lock, a listed site in Chatillon-sur-Loire. The **Nautical Museum** shows you the peculiarities of navigation on both the canal and the river. The **Mosaic and Enamel Museum** is also linked with the activities of the river and recounts 150 years of the mass production of buttons, pearls, and mosaics in the name of art.

4 Gien

Overlooking the Loire River, the **château of Anne de Beaujeu**, daughter of Louis XI, exhibits the **history of hunting and nature**. Hunting with hounds, falconry, and ancestral practices are all explained and you can see all the instruments, clothing, arts and techniques. Here you will learn about weapons throughout the ages, venerie and falconry. The secrets of production of the famous **Gien porcelain** can be discovered in the **Porcelain Museum** along with its collection of rare or monumental pieces.

5 Sully-sur-Loire

Composed of an imposing **medieval keep** and a wing added in the 18th century, this sumptuous castle was the residence of the famous minister of Henry IV. It is currently undergoing large-scale restoration work to valorise the site and its history, and is hosting a temporary exhibition presenting this work.

6 Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire

Fleury's **Benedictine Abbey** is a Roman masterpiece just a couple of feet from the Loire. Gregorian chants can still be heard here as a living memory of the past. The Basilica is the only remains of the original Abbey.

7 Germigny-des-Près

Germigny's **Carolingian Oratory** was the first monument of Christian art to be built in the western hemisphere. It was built by Theodulf, a close advisor to Charlemagne. Go inside to find the surprising Byzantine dome covered in mosaics.

8 Chilleurs-aux-Bois

Chamerolles although built for pleasure looks like a fort and is the former residence of a certain Lancelot of the Lake. You will be enchanted by its gardens where a vegetable garden rubs shoulders with a maze and numerous aromatic plants. If you have a sensitive nose - take the **Perfume Tour** through the Château's museum and indulge in the exhibitions of reconstructed perfume production through the ages. Throughout the year a variety of entertainment appeals to the young and old alike.

9 Pithiviers

Take the time to relive the sensations of yesteryear, on board an old locomotive along 4 km of preserved track thanks to the **Transport Museum**. The **Saffron Museum** in Boynes will remind you of the importance of the region in the history of this precious spice.

10 Orleans

Although Orléans owes much of its fame to Joan of Arc, the city today still has many other attractions on offer. Stone-built treasures such as the **gothic Sainte-Croix Cathedral**. Colourful treasures in the Butterfly House at the **La Source Floral Park** (35 hectares), which can be seen on a stroll among exotic specimens; one activity among many to choose from. Musical treasures at the **Campanaire Bollée Museum** which will ring bells with visitors when they see a lesson on how to make this unique musical instrument. Treasures from the past at the **Orléans History and Archaeology Museum** with an exceptional collection of Gallo-Roman bronze statues. The **Groslot Mansion** (16th century), where Charles IX, Henri III and Henri IV all stayed, built by the bailiff Groslot, is also well worth a visit, as is the **Fine Arts Museum** and its famous Pastels Cabinet.

11 Meung-sur-Loire

The **château was the residence of the Bishops of Orléans** for seven centuries and takes you from the Middle Ages up to the splendours of the 17th century. This tour is full of unusual surprises such as the Bishop's bathroom, the underground passages and the "oubliettes". Along the little rivers, better known as the "Mauves", you will walk past old mills used for tanning, flour and other grains. Old mills used for tanning, flour and other grains.

12 Beaugency

Beaugency is a strategic location thanks to its medieval bridge on the Loire and was invaded by the English before being liberated by Joan of Arc. The town one of the "**Most Beautiful Detours of France**" welcomes you along its small, peaceful, medieval streets.

What's on

► Beaugency Festival.

"Beaugency Goes Back in Time". From 30/6 to 9/7. Tel: +332 38 44 54 42 or +332 38 44 86 32.

► "The secret word of Chamerolles", **Château de Chamerolles**, join the games in the gardens, solve the riddles and discover chamerolle's mystery word. From 8/7 to 3/9. Tel: +332 38 39 84 66.

► "Cléry-Saint-André Recounts" the epic of Joan of Arc on the Loire and highlights the **Royal River and its legends**. Sound and light show. From 14/7 to 29/7. Tel: +332 38 45 94 06.

► The 'Nocturnes de Ferrières' in **Ferrières-en-Gâtinais**. At nightfall, as you pass through the door of the former abbey, the torches light up and you are plunged into the atmosphere of a medieval village... The fairy tale begins! Soldiers, craftsmen, church-builders and noisy passers-by all recreate the feel of a festive evening in times gone by... From 29/7 to 13/8. Tel: +332 38 96 58 86

► **Jour de Loire, Loiret**. La Caravane, a travelling show covering 4 days, and more than 150 convivial events with water as the theme: moments to dream, discover, navigate and share. Performances, dinners, picnics, Loire navigation, exhibitions... From 24/5 to 28/5. Tel: +332 38 78 04 04.

► **The Joan of Arc Festival, Orléans**. 577th anniversary of the liberation of Orléans by Joan of Arc in 1429. Medieval festivities, medieval walk, sound and light show on Ste-Croix Cathedral, parade, concerts, fireworks display. From 29/4 to 8/5. Tel: +332 38 24 05 05.

► **La Source Floral Park, Orléans**. The flowering of the National Collection of 1000 varieties of Iris planted in a contemporary garden of 5000 m². From mid May to early June. Tel: +332 38 49 30 00.

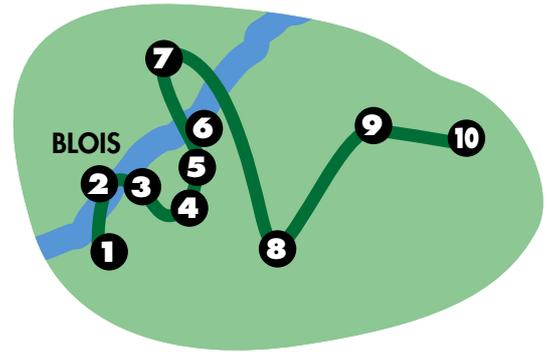
► **Orléans' Jazz Festival, Orléans**. From 12/6 to 1/7. Tel: +332 38 24 05 05.

► "Festival de Sully", **Sully-sur-Loire**. Classical music concerts. From 2/6 to 18/6. Tel: +332 38 36 29 46.

From Chambord

to Poaching - see them both in a new light

On this trail, you will find man and nature working in perfect harmony, with unusual results.



1 Chaumont-sur-Loire

The **château** originally belonged to Catherine de Medici, but when her husband died, she pressured Diane de Poitiers into swapping Chaumont for the château at Chenonceau. Today, you can still see the drawbridge, which has remained intact and the 19th century Hermes saddlery in the courtyard. Between June and October, the château plays host to the **International Garden Festival**, with landscape gardeners coming from all over the world to create beautiful gardens around a central theme, which changes from year to year. The whole place becomes awash with the colours and smells of flowers.

2 Blois

Blois is known as a “**Town of Art and History**”, and what better way to uncover its beauty and heritage than by taking a walk through the old town, down to the banks of the Loire? While you're there, why not take a boat trip to explore the river's abundant flora and fauna, or take a ride around the grounds of Blois Château by horse and cart. The château itself is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture, betraying aspects of mediaeval style. The Kings of France loved to stay here, and it's easy to see why. It was built right in the heart of the city, and all 5 different types of architecture were used in its construction. The mystical backdrop of Blois is the perfect setting for **Robert Houdin's House of Magic** - an entertaining place to visit for kids of all ages! The town really enhances its reputation for art and culture with the **Artefact Museum**, a stunning collection of works by Arman, Dali, Christo and Cesar.

3 Cellettes

Beauregard Château was built by a statesman, a friend of Ronsard, before being extended in the seventeenth century. Its interior decor and wood panelling are an art lovers dream. The château houses 327 portraits (including 15 of French Kings). This illustrious gallery lends a bit of soul to the history lesson. An advancing army is not the type of scene you expect to be found on blue enamel Delft porcelain tiling! The grounds themselves boast a portrait garden.

4 Cheverny

Cheverny Château is where popular and classical art meet. This magnificent 17th Century château was the inspiration behind Captain Haddock's **Château at Moulinsart** (of TinTin fame). In fact, TinTin fans will love Cheverny - there is a permanent exhibition called “The Secrets of Moulinsart”. You can get around the park by boat on the lake or in a buggy - a fun and original way to explore the leafy surroundings.

5 Tour-en-Sologne

Villesavin Château was home to François I's private secretary, and benefited in no small measure from being close to the architects at Chambord Château. Nearby is the **Museum of Marriage**, built in 1840, which contains everything you can imagine to do with conjugal rites. In the gardens, children have a great time trying to find out the identity of the ghost who has haunted Villesavin since 1919.

6 Chambord

The **Royal Château at Chambord** and its grounds cover almost three thousand acres - an area almost the size of Paris making it an ideal choice for rambling and discovery local nature. There are hundreds of miles of cycling paths and barge trips on the Cosson, and deer and wild boar roam freely in this great natural spot. Don't miss the château where you will discover the exceptional double spiral staircase. This staircase will lead you to the terraces, where you will have a remarkable view over the estate.

7 Talcy

The **Talcy Castle** nestles comfortably in La Beauce, and has been delighting visitors since the sixteenth century with its mixture of mediaeval ruggedness and Renaissance elegance. The castle was home to Cassandra, the daughter of an Italian banker who was considered by Ronsard to be his ideal love. He was inspired by her presence here to write “*Les Amours*”...

8 Romorantin

Car enthusiasts will love the **Matra museum**, which follows the history of the company's three Le Mans victories during the 1970's, right up until the latest single seater - the Avantage. For fans of history, there is the **Sologne Museum**, which is housed in an old mill.

9 La Ferté-st-Aubin

La Ferté Château is renowned for its **old-style cuisine**, and gives demonstrations and tastings of its historical cooking. The **Enchanted Island** is a fairy tale come true for children, with its shows in the Château's Park.

10 Chaon

Don't take your preconceptions with you into the **Poaching Museum**. The art of illegal hunting is laid bare in a refreshing, yet unapologetic way. It also gives Raboliot, Maurice Genevoix's hero, the chance to make a comeback.

What's on

► “On the bridge” festival - Blois.

Song, classical and jazz music, street theatre and a young persons show, local heritage animation... From 30/6 to 13/7.

Tel: +332 54 44 51 82.

and during the festival: +332 54 588 456.

► “Once upon a time in Blois”, Blois.

Evening performance using the most up-to-date sound and visual technology.

From 15/4 to 24/9.

Tel: +332 54 55 26 31.

► Clairs de Lune de Chambord, Chambord.

Sound and light fantasy on the main facade of the chateau at nightfall. A summertime invitation on a walk along the Cosson. Free of charge.

From beginning July until mid-September.

Tel: +332 54 50 40 00.

► Chambord Horse-Riding Extravaganza.

Different scenes retrace the château's history from the Renaissance to the Comte de Chambord, thanks to the fabulous performances of the equine actors.

From 1/5 to 30/9.

Tel: +332 54 20 31 01.

► Plants and Gardens Festival,

La Ferté Saint-Aubin.

From 29/4 to 1/5.

Tel: +332 38 76 52 72.

► Nights of Sologne, Nouan-le-Fuzelier.

Big pyrotechnic show: a dazzling display of fireworks, light and music combining the mysterious and the wonderful. 2/9.

Tel: +332 38 59 98 56.

► Gourmet Days in Sologne, Romorantin-Lanthenay. Food & Wine Fair.

From 29/10 to 30/10.

Tel: +332 54 96 99 88.

From Villandry's Renaissance gardens to the towering Pagoda of Chanteloup

Sharks, fairy-tale châteaux, and an Italian genius: expect the unexpected on these Loire riverbanks!



1 Langeais

The austere **Langeais Château** is unquestionably mediaeval, despite having been built in the fifteenth century, and is well worth a visit. As you cross the still working drawbridge, and wander around the fully-furnished rooms, you could be forgiven for thinking that you've taken a step back in time. On an interesting historical note, Charles VIII and Anne of Brittany celebrated their marriage in this very château.

2 Rigny-Ussé

The **Ussé Château** is quite literally straight out of a fairy tale. It was the inspiration behind Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty".

3 Villandry

One of the last great Renaissance Châteaux in the Loire Valley. It is a rare example of a château whose gardens are in the same style as its outer walls. The **gardens** themselves were re-designed at the beginning of the twentieth century, and are truly a wonder to behold. They are a floral expression of love and music, interlinking the water gardens and vegetable gardens which bring colour and joy to those who come to see them throughout the year.

4 La Riche

The spirit of Ronsard is almost tangible amidst the remains of the **St Cosme Priory**, which lay within the walls of eight gardens of roses and irises. He was the prior here until his death in 1565, when he was buried in his very own church. His bedroom and workshop are open to the public.

5 Tours

Tours, located between the Loire and the Cher, is acclaimed as a "**Town of Art and History**", and has no shortage of ways to attract visitors. When the **St Gatien Cathedral** is lit up at night, you can see the four centuries of architecture that went into its construction. Even more beautifully, the eighteenth century stained glass bursts into life. The **streets Rue Colbert, Rue Briçonnet and Rue de Grand Marché** are lined with gorgeous half-timbered houses. The wood panelled style is also used in the buildings around the historic centre of Tours, the **Plumereau Square**. Tours is also home to the world's only **Guild Museum**, which brings together some of the greatest pieces of works produced by guilds throughout the ages.

6 Chançay

The **Valmer Château** is a haven for horticulture buffs. Built in 1640 in a vineyard in Vouvray, by an advisor to Louis XIII, the château has a **park** covering 40 acres, dotted with columns and terraced Italian **gardens**. Take a peek at the vegetable gardens, where a range of beautiful, succulent and rare vegetables are grown.

7 Autrèche

The **Beaumarchais Nature Reserve** is home to bison, wild boar, ostriches, deer and doe in semi-captivity. Take a closer look at the game, from the safety of the Safari Train, in a park stretching over 15 acres.

8 Amboise

François I regularly came to stay in Amboise. When you come to visit the château's furnished apartments, it's easy to imagine the sumptuous banquets that the great monarch used to hold here. At nightfall, from high points in the town, you can see the stone walls of the château daubed in eerie lamplight. While you're in the area, why not look up François I's protégé Leonardo da Vinci, who spent his last years in the Clos Lucé Chateau. The park at the Chateau takes visitors on a cultural journey through the Italian genius's art and visions. Standing 44 metres tall, the Chanteloup Pagoda (18th century), the last vestige of a castle inhabited by the Duke of Choiseul, offers one of the finest views of the Loire Valley, ancient games and, thanks to its new design, an imaginary trip to China. The Miniature Châteaux park is a collection of 45 masterpieces, miniature models of château country, with 9000 bonsai trees set over an acre. Worth a close look!

9 Lussault-sur-Loire

The **Loire Valley Aquarium** manages to display freshwater and saltwater fish specimens under the same roof. The cast includes coral reef shark to piranha, through cayman and river torrential and river fauna.

What's on

► **At the Court of King François - Amboise.** Night-time spectacular in the setting of the Royal Château of Amboise. François I and his court, horsemen, villagers and travelling artists relive the pomp and ceremony of the Renaissance. From the end of June until end of August. Tel: +332 47 57 14 47.

► **20th Jazz Festival, Montlouis-sur-Loire.** More than sixty concerts of jazz, blues and associated music. September. Tel: +332 47 50 72 70.

► **St-Cosme Spring Music Festival.** In the heart of Ronsard country, this chamber music event enters its 14th year in the Touraine and is dedicated to promoting young musicians of exceptional talent. From 17/3 to 26/3. Tel: +332 47 54 11 32.

► **The Semblancay spectacular.** A Touraine historical epic: from the Gallo-Roman period to the Revolution. 450 actors, 12 horses parades. From the end of June until mid-August. Tel: +332 47 56 66 77.

► **'Rayons Frais' Festival; arts and the city, Tours.** A resolutely contemporary event: urban arts, plastic arts, theatre, dance, music... A great convivial moment. Free. Mid-July. Tel: +332 47 21 65 16.

► **Music festival, Tours.** At the Grange de Meslay and in Tours, a series of concerts given by renowned musicians, in the experimental spirit of Sviatoslav Richter. 31/1 and 1/2, from 23 June to 2 July and from 21 to 23 November. Tel: +332 47 21 65 08.

► **A day in Villandry's vegetable garden.** A weekend offering the unique occasion for amateurs to share the techniques, savoir faire and advice of the Villandry gardeners. 30/9 and 1/10. Tel: +332 47 50 02 09.

From Rabelaisian Chinon Castle to the utopian town of Richelieu

*From a charming village to Gargantuan vegetable gardens,
from a quadrilaterally-planned town to the fortress of a medieval king:
welcome to Rabelais country!*

1 Candes Saint-Martin

The peaceful village lies at the confluence of the Rivers Loire and Vienne. It is as endearing as it is harmonious and one of the "Most Beautiful Villages of France". The St Martin Collegiate of the 12th and 13th centuries gently overlooks the village poised on the edge of the water.

2 Seully

"La Devinière", is only two minutes from the charming village of Seully that figured in the "guerres picrocholines". This is where Rabelais was born and lived giving you the opportunity to enter into the great writer's universe and discover or rediscover his work during your visit.

3 Loire-Anjou Touraine

This **Natural Regional Park** with its tributaries of the Rivers Cher, Indre, Thouet and Vienne is a mosaic of landscapes which you will thoroughly enjoy getting to know. The unusual troglodyte dwellings dug into the tufa rocks often house mushroom caves and will definitely take you by surprise. In one of the underground shelters you will learn how to prepare "poires tapées", a recipe that vanished at the beginning of the 20th century but that has resurfaced today. Children can enjoy animated displays and learn about the richness of their natural heritage. Guides from the Centre of Environmental Initiatives or other associations will take you to unusual heritage sites during walks organised throughout the year.

4 Chinon

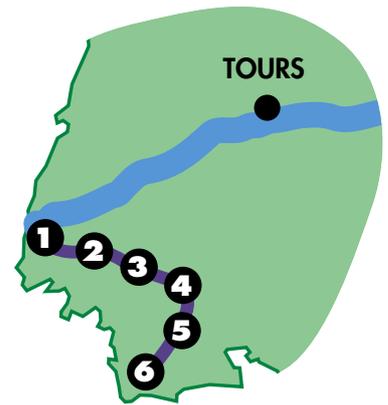
It was at **Chinon Castle** that Joan of Arc met her king, Charles VII. To learn more about the life of a sailor stop off at the **River House**. Here you will find model boats, an aquarium and an audio-visual presentation that unveils local life on the river. Let yourself be taken back into history, board a "futreau" and float along the River Vienne or if you prefer wander through the old town, among the half-timbered houses. Chinon is host to the 2nd Brotherhood of France, that of the Good Rabelaisian Knights. They hold four chapter ceremonies each year to enrol new knights. Enjoy the fun and festivities of this "Town of Art and History".

5 Léré

Recently restored, the 15th century **Rivau Château** welcomes you into a world of fairy tales. Its gardens, its "Gargantua vegetable garden" and its forest decorated with giant sculptures rival each other for their poetic appeal and ability to engulf you.

6 Richelieu

This unusual, innovative city was built by the famous cardinal himself and is a **model of 17th century urbanism**. The quadrilateral architectural plan is in some ways ahead of its time in terms of modern town-planning. This is where Richelieu's debtors stayed at the end of his life.

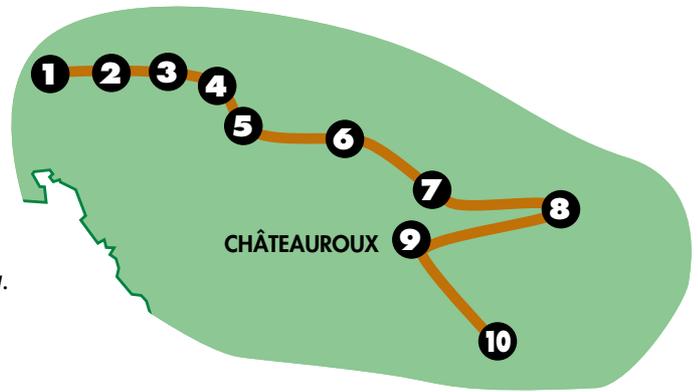


What's on

- ▶ **The Old-fashioned Market in Chinon** sells local produce. There is also an annual village parade and night ball - 19/8. Tel: +332 47 93 17 85.
- ▶ **Traditional boat trips (futreau, toue) on the Vienne and Loire from Candes-St Martin.** From mid February to mid November. Tel: +332 47 95 93 15.
- ▶ **Initiation Ceremonies of the Brotherhood of Rabelaisian Knights, Chinon.** St Vincent chapter in January, Flower chapter in June, Wine Harvesting in September and Diane chapter in December. Tel: +332 47 93 30 44.
- ▶ **Pumpkin and Vine Festival, Léré.** In the magical setting of the Château of Le Rivau, the pumpkin and vine festival offers children the spectacle of pumpkin juggling, and adults vegetable-garden festivities, arts & crafts, a gourmet market, workshops – there is something for everyone. 10/9. Tel: +332 47 95 77 47.

From Azay-le-Rideau Castle to George Sand's Home

Combine a history lesson with a tour through hunting country.



1 Azay-le-Rideau

This **château** was built in the sixteenth century, on an islet in the Indre River. The building comes to life during the Azay-le-Rideau show. During high season, visitors can see the building in a totally new light on this night-time tour. A few minutes down the road is the Maurice Dufresne museum, which shows off almost 3000 different kinds of historic machinery, such as old cars, weapons and agricultural tools - all lovingly restored. The theme of restoration continues in the Goupillières troglodyte valley, which proves that limestone wasn't used just for the ornate exteriors of châteaux. Long ago, people used to live in troglodyte farms set into the hillside, which doubled up as a Middle Ages subterranean refuge.

2 Villaines-les-Rochers

Basketwork has been central to life in Villaines-les-Rochers for a long time. Indeed, Balzac referred to it in his work, knowing as he did the importance of the craft to the region. Today, they produce a third of all basketwork production in France, and visitors can watch the wicker-weavers at work. The Wicker and Basketwork museum was essential to tell the story of this craft.

3 Saché

Now here is a town of letters! Saché was Balzac's preferred residence, far from the madding crowds of Paris. Where else could the author have drawn inspiration for "Lis of the Valley", than the sixteenth century manor where he spent so much time, without being able to buy it. In the museum, much of the décor remains unchanged, and you can find original manuscripts of Balzac's work. Drift into the writer's world, and explore where some of the finest French literature was written.

4 Céré-la-Ronde

Tally-ho! Montpoupon Château, and the Veneur Museum, which lies within it, serves as a quiet reminder that the stag hunting teams from these parts were reputed to be the best around. The museum gives an insight into the lifestyle of the hunting gentry with hunting artefacts, a renovated hunting lodge, and various related arts and crafts.

5 Loches

The **dungeon** of this **château** was used as a prison right up until 1926. The 36-metre climb to its summit is breathless work, but the view from the top is over the beautiful buildings which make up the Chancery. The Chancery houses a permanent exhibition, "Town of Art and History". An absolute must when visiting Loches, one of the "Most beautiful Detours of France" at the foot of the dungeon lies a secret garden, which manages to mix functionality with beauty, with its aromatic plants and vegetable patches. In Vignemont, you can find Troglodyte houses carved out of rock. There are over 600 metres of tunnels to walk through. The limestone that was excavated was

also used in the construction of many of the monuments in the region.

6 Valençay

Valençay, one of the "Most beautiful Detours of France" is perched neatly on the sloping hillside. Its sixteenth century **château** is derived from Chambord's Château, and was a gift from Napoleon to Talleyrand. Talleyrand's spirit soaks through its very walls. Visitors are invited to spend "a day with the Prince of Talleyrand", following him through his spectacular culinary performance through to the Duels of the Duchesse: all acted out by costumed actors. The park has a children's **château**, and Napoleon's Grand Maze, in which the idea is to solve clues based on Napoleon, and learn all about him whilst having fun! Moving on to another time completely there is the Car Museum, which holds over 60 vehicles, including plenty of bikes, not to mention an impressive collection of posters and signposts all around what is a very modern and interactive place to visit.

7 Bouges-le-Château

This **château** can satisfy the most demanding tastes. It has a 40 acre park, French gardens, a museum of horse drawn carriages, hunting lodges, as well as an uncanny resemblance to the Petit Trianon, in Versailles. At night, turn back time with a tour with guides in period costumes.

8 Issoudun

Relive the greatest days of mediaeval history at the White Tower. Or for a completely different theme, explore the St Roch Hospice Museum with artefacts used in apothecary during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It also puts on contemporary art shows throughout the year.

9 Châteauroux

The ancient Cordelier's Convent looks out over the Indre Valley, and is the site for various exhibitions of contemporary art, and houses the Fine Arts School. Don't miss the terrace gardens, with its superb washhouse, which was restored by the Tour de France Guild. Bertrand Mansion takes its name from one of Napoleon's fids, and is set in a seventeenth century hall. It tells epic tales from the Napoleonic era, and not to be missed is the spectacular aviary, made for Napoleon by 18 Chinese workers during their incarceration at St Hélène.

10 Nohant

This region is dedicated to the memory of George Sand. Here you can find the same atmosphere that inspired her to write her famous novels. As well as her house, you can visit the Puppet Theatre that was made for her son - where no less than 120 plays were performed!

What's on

► 'Dreams and Light', a night-time show at the Château of Azay-le-Rideau. Discover a dream-world where the **château** and park are transformed into a whirlwind of light effects, images and water.
From 25/5 to 16/9.
Tel: +332 47 45 42 04.

► DARC Courses & Festival in Châteauroux. Dance, song and comedy workshops... and a festival previously featuring Lavilliers, Alpha Blondy, Bénabar and more... August.
Tel: +332 54 27 49 16.

► The International Frédéric Chopin Convention in La Châtre. Concerts and conferences dedicated to Chopin. From 21/7 to 28/7.
Tel: +332 54 48 46 40.

► "Murmurailles", Loches. An evening extravaganza: procession through the monuments of the royal city of Loches. Light shows. August. Tel: +332 47 91 82 82.

► Opera Festival, Loches. In a magnificent setting - Baschet Park - presentation of Madame Butterfly by Puccini. July.
Tel: + 332 47 91 82 82.

► The Romantic Festivities of Nohant. Classical concerts, literary and musical presentations in the old Nohant grange and stables.
From 10/6 to 25/6.
Tel: +332 54 48 46 40.

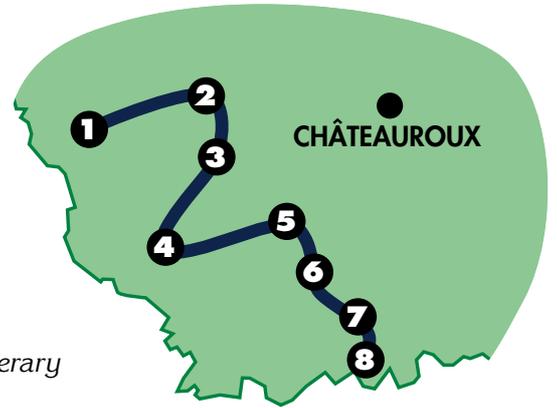
► The International Convention of String Instrument Makers and Master Bell Ringers takes place in Saint Chartier attended by 130 String Instrument Makers and includes concerts, entertainment, a Ball etc.
From 14/7 to 16/7.
Tel: +332 54 48 60 60.

► The Forgotten Vegetables Fair of Tranzault takes place in the Church Square and includes pumpkins and other rare vegetables. 8/10.
Tel: +332 54 30 81 05 or +332 54 30 81 80.

► The Cursed Hunter, Valençay. In the forest and parkland of the Château of Valençay, a show recounting the adventures of the archer Guillaume winning the heart of the fair Agnès... From 2/8 to 19/8.
Tel: +332 54 00 04 42.

From the Brenne Natural Regional Park to the Haute-Touche Nature Reserve

From the land of a thousand lakes to the Secrets of the Red Sea, this itinerary takes you through the Brenne Natural Regional Park.



1 Le Grand Pressigny

Here one treasure protects another... the **château**, a mixture of medieval and Renaissance styles, houses a **Prehistoric museum**. Beautiful collections remind you of the importance of carved flint in the region. In the past great quantities were exported. Videos and models will give you a fascinating insight into this period in history.

2 Obterre

The 100 hectare **Haute-Touche Nature Reserve** is dramatic with over 1000 animals including deer, birds, tigers, antelopes, zebra and giraffe. It is a real delight to see wolves back in the area after so long.

3 Rosnay

Welcome to the land of a thousand lakes! Full of woods, moors, lakes and prairies. An exceptional landscape to behold! The **Brenne Natural Regional Park** has everything binocular addicts and fanatical walkers need and in general nature lovers of every type. The **Park's Information Centre** introduces you to the area and is a good starting point for your excursions. In Blanc the **Brenne Ecology Museum** and its permanent exhibit on "people, a country, history" depicts the park's evolution through the ages.

4 Ingrandes

The Red Sea floods this village in Indre through **Henry de Monfreid's souvenirs**, the famous explorer, who settled here in 1948. Now its your turn to explore thanks to the village museum dedicated to this insatiable figure.

5 Saint-Marcel

The ultimate modern concept for a living museum must be to evolve through archaeological excavations. **Argentomagus** can not be missed on your journey in search of the past. Based on part of this **Gallo-Roman town**, the museum takes you for a dynamic hands-on tour from prehistoric times up to the end of the Roman Empire.

6 Argenton-sur-Creuse

Men worrying about how they look is nothing new! The **Shirt Museum** located in an old shirt factory reveals in an original way the secrets of male elegance through the ages. You can even admire shirts belonging to famous people.

7 Gargillesse

George Sand was overwhelmed by the charm of this small village of artistes, one of the "**Most Beautiful Villages of France**" to the point of buying a property there. Go into its parish church where you can admire beautiful 13th, 15th and 16th century **frescoes** on the walls of its crypt as well as a collection of magnificent historic columns.

8 Eguzon

Everybody in the water! Chamboln Lake, created by the Eguzon dam offers sport and relaxation thanks to a **variety of watersports** from swimming to canoeing including water skiing. Follow "Le Boucle du Pin" for a peaceful walk with breathtaking views. If this makes you want to learn more about the countryside then visit the **Creuse Valley Museum**. Here you can learn about the crafts and daily life of George Sand's era as well as about the construction of the dam.

What's on

► The Chestnut and Walking Festival, Eguzon.

Three days of entertainment based on the chestnut where conviviality rhymes with authenticity: gastronomy, artisans, night walks, evening gatherings, rambles on foot, horseback, bike and boat, performances etc.

From 30/10 to 1/11.

Tel: +332 54 47 43 04 or +332 54 47 43 69.

► Gargillesse Festival. An annual summer festival

celebrating the harp and other types of music with the chance to hear renowned ensembles and young artists who have won international competitions. From 16/8 to 20/8.

Tel: +332 54 47 85 06.

► The Archo-Games of Le Grand-Pressigny.

The village showcases pre-historic arts and activities during the games: Flint cutting, catapulting. July.

Tel: +332 47 94 90 20.

► The Brenne Ramble, Mézières-en-Brenne.

This Great National Ramble takes place over three days, by foot, on horseback, on mountain bike or by carriage in Brenne Natural Regional Park through exceptional flora and fauna.

From 4/8 to 6/8.

Tel: +332 54 38 12 24.

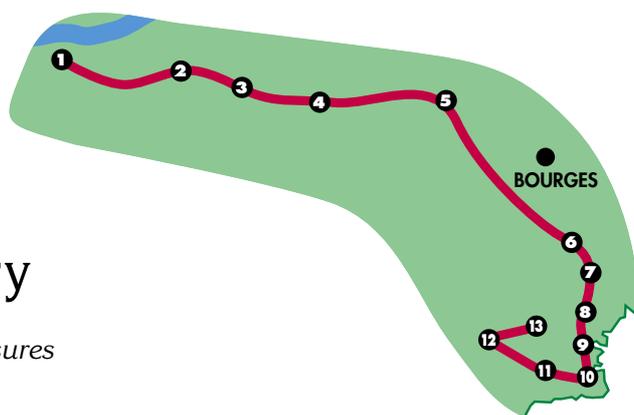
► 9th Antique and Experimental Archaeological Crafts Days. Saint-Marcel.

July (conditions apply).

Tel: +332 54 24 47 31.

From the “Chateau des Dames” in Chenonceau to Notre Dame of Orsan Priory

Straight to the heart of the Cher Valley, with its hidden treasures of stunning architecture and beautiful gardens.



1 Montlouis-sur-Loire

Innumerable varieties of tomatoes enjoy the traditional vegetable **gardens of Bourdaisière Château**. A **Tomato Hot House** can be visited, as well as the park, arboretum, the stables and the château itself. “The Tomato Festival” offers two days of fruit tasting, meeting the gardeners or participating in seminars.

2 Chenonceaux

Chenonceau Château, also known as “the Castle of the Lady”, is an uncontested architectural ‘Master Piece’, that would not be the same without the water which flows along its beautiful stone walls. For a closer look take a boat ride on the River Cher. Wonder through the gardens, lose yourself in the maze and treat yourself in the floral boutique; full of bouquets of dried flowers and ornaments.

3 Bourré

Many years ago tufa, which was used to build the Loire Valley Châteaux, was mined in this picturesque “**troglodyte**” village. Visit the underground town and learn all about quarrying methods from the past. Today mushroom cultivation flourishes in the humidity of the stones 40m underground! In this village where time stands still, you can share the inhabitant’s passion for his troglodyte habitat where you will discover: homes carved into the rock, a stone mason’s quarry and a 17th century rock magnanerie of silk worms.

4 Saint-Aignan

Beauval Zoological Park, one of Europe’s top animal parks, is home to tigers, gorillas, rhinoceros, white lions, crocodiles, manatees, birds of prey and a stud farm... An oasis where threatened species are protected and the animals grow up in their natural environment. Sea lion shows and birds of prey demonstrations break up the tour. The animal nursery, where numerous baby animals can be found, will touch the hearts of children of all ages!

5 Vierzon

Take a change in direction and go on an unusual voyage back in time! In Vierzon, a railway junction since the mid 19th century, you will relive more than 150 years of railway history at the **Laumônier Museum**. The steam train takes pride of place with a unique collection of parts, models, sketches, etc.

6 Meillant

Meillant Château, built at the end of the XVth century, heralds the future master pieces of the Loire Valley. With its Lion Tower, richly decorated by Milanese sculptors, the château depicts the end of the Gothic era in all its splendour and the more discreet awakening of the Renaissance period. While another surprise awaits you in the cellars - a permanent collection of painstakingly reconstructed models of a medieval village, a Renaissance town, a printing house from the Gutenberg period... everyday life from the Middle Ages to the present day in miniature!

7 Bruère-Allichamps

Noirlac Abbey is one of the most well preserved monasteries in Europe and almost entirely open to the public. Guided tours introduce you to the Cistercian world.

8 Saint-Amand-Montrond

Paradise in the heart of Cher? **This Golden City** has nothing of a legend - its pyramid is a tourism and trade centre. The town of St Amand, a member of the “**Most Beautiful Detours of France**”, is in fact the third centre in France for the production of gold jewellery! Inside the pyramid, the graphic museum area helps you to discover the myth and reality of this precious metal.

9 Ainay-le-Vieil

Nicknamed **Little Carcassonne**. Ainay-le-Vieil’s medieval walls looks like a film set in the middle of its green surroundings. Across the threshold you will discover the charm of the flamboyant gothic inner dwelling.

10 Epineuil-le-Fleuriel

Are you a fan of romanticism? Come and relive the atmosphere of **Grand Meaulnes**, a masterpiece of 20th century literature, in and around Alain Fournier’s restored school. Allow yourself to be transported into the past...

11 Culan

Located on a protected natural site, the **chateau** and fortress of culan stands proudly on a rock overlooking magnificent mediaeval gardens. In season, the chateau holds numerous events including daily falconry shows and evening tours by candlelight.

12 Maisonnais

The medieval gardens of the **Notre-Dame-d’Orsan Priory** invite you to contemplate a variety of green spaces and ancient plants, to discover amongst other things a vegetable garden maze, or a garden of vines and to listen to precious gardening tips. Experience one of those rare moments of great serenity here, touching both sense and taste.

13 Loye-sur-Arnon

A medieval castle where flowers and sculptures abound: the **Artistic Gardens of Drulon** form a harmonious and constantly evolving ensemble. The Classic Garden has 1300 rose trees around its pond, followed by the secret rural and intimate Castle Garden. As for the Landscape Garden, green spaces constitute outdoor exhibition rooms as you cross between the pathway to the marsh and the Classic Garden. There are as many piths awaiting European artist’s works, as sculptors that you will surprise in full flow.

What’s on

► Noirlac Festival, Bruère - Allichamps.

A Meeting of International Groups of vocal artists. In July and August.
Tel: +332 48 48 00 10.

► A Music Festival in the Roman Churches of Berry.

Between 10 and 15 concerts in Roman Berry and its illuminated churches. In July and August.
Tel: +332 48 48 00 10
and +332 48 23 02 60.

► Night time at Chenonceau.

A dreamy and romantic musical journey with a shadow and light show on the castle walls just like in Diane and Catherine’s gardens. Beginning June to end August.
Tel: +332 47 23 90 07.

► 21st Music Festival of Pontlevoy.

In July and August.
Tel: +332 54 71 60 77.