



## Western Loire Valley Châteaux 2-Day Circuit Tour

### Tour Overview

This tour is 2 days / 3 nights with 2 different overnight destinations and the opportunity to visit at least 4 major castles. Major châteaux on this itinerary include Villandry, Azay-le-Rideau, Ussé, and Langeais.

**Tour Dates:** You may begin this tour on any day from May 1 to September 30. See [Schedule](#) for blackout dates and additional tour scheduling considerations.

**Location:** The Loire Valley region of France known as the "Garden of France." The region has been on the UNESCO's World Heritage list since 2000, owing to its culture and art, concentrated largely in the region's châteaux (castles). The Loire Valley is just 1 - 2 hours from Paris. Overnight destinations on this tour include Tours and Azay-le-Rideau.

**Tour Type:** Circuit tour

**Terrain:** Flat for the most part with only one long climb each day. Neither of these climbs should be considered a deterrent to the average cyclist. Cycling is primarily on designated bike routes, which may be separate paths or tiny roads shared with local residents.

**Length:** 2 days / 3 nights

**Distance:** Total: 79 km / 49 miles. Average per day: 39.5 km / 24.5 miles.

### Highlights:

- The historic royal city of Tours.
- Some of the grandest of the Loire Valley castles, including the castles of Villandry, Azay-le-Rideau, Ussé, and Langeais.
- Countless smaller castles.
- Tranquil cycling on bike paths and tiny, quiet roads.
- Easy cycling along the banks of the region's lovely rivers: the Loire, the Cher, and the Indre.
- Beautiful countryside and charming medieval villages.
- Vineyards and lots of opportunities for wine tastings.

## **Daily Itinerary**

### **Arrive in Tours. Spend 1 night.**

Your tour begins in Tours, a modern, dynamic, and lively city that clearly demonstrates a commitment to preserving its rich history. Tours is located less than 2 hours by train from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport and 1 hour from Paris. You may arrive at the time of your choosing to take advantage of the sights and energy of this university town. No activities are scheduled for this day.

The historic center of Tours is a wonderful place to visit on foot with narrow its medieval streets and beautiful squares lined with half-timbered buildings, its grand cathedral, and of course, its castle. The restoration of Old Tours with its pedestrian-only areas was in fact so successful that it led to national legislation providing incentives for the restoration and preservation of the nation's medieval structures (la Loi Malraux.)

### **Day 1: Pick up Rental Bikes. Cycle from Tours to Azay-le-Rideau - 35 km / 22 miles. Spend 2 nights.**

On today's ride you'll visit two of the greatest chateaux of the Loire: Villandry and Azay-le-Rideau. After leaving busy Tours on designated bike paths, your route follows the River Cher to the beautiful riverside village of Savonnières.

Just beyond Savonnières, you arrive at the Château de Villandry, one of the last great Renaissance castles to be built in the Loire Valley. Best known for its internationally renowned gardens, Villandry's grounds contain canals, fountains, cascades, vine-covered pergolas, and a Romanesque village church.

After your visit of the castle, you'll make one long climb to the top of the plateau to enjoy tranquil cycling through the Touraine's rich farmland and vineyards on your way to Azay-le-Rideau. You'll cycle designated bike routes that rarely see motorized traffic. A steep descent takes you down to the river valley of the Indre and the charming village of Azay-le-Rideau.

The main attraction in Azay-le-Rideau is its castle, truly one of the gems of the Renaissance, commanding a luxuriant setting on the banks of the River Indre. Its lines and dimensions suit the site so perfectly that it conveys an unforgettable impression of elegance. Partly built over the River Indre, Azay-le-Rideau consists of two main wings set at right angles. The reflections in the water add to the chimerical quality of the site and, together with the rows of houses and gardens along the Indre, make excellent subjects for photographs. The interior is lavishly decorated and furnished with some pieces of truly outstanding beauty.

### **Day 2: Azay-le-Rideau Loop - 44 km / 27 miles.**

On today's ride you'll visit two more of the region's most renowned chateaux: Langeais and Ussé. Your day begins with your only tough climb out of the Indre River Valley to the top of the plateau before plunging back down to the Loire River Valley. Along the way you'll enjoy peaceful cycling through the vineyards and wonderful vistas of the surrounding countryside.

Following your dash back down to the Loire it's just a short distance to your first castle, the Chateau de Langeais. You'll arrive in Langeais over its magnificent suspension bridge, almost as popular as its chateau. Langeais is a lovely medieval village, set at the junction of the Loire Valley's wine and castle routes. Its 15th century château, known for its exceptional collection of tapestries, is the perfect example of a late medieval castle, complete with parapet walk and drawbridge.

Following your visit to Langeais you'll return to a stretch of serene riverside cycling along the levy of the Loire and past the charming village of Bréhémont. Effortless cycling takes you all the way to your next castle, the 15th century Château d'Ussé. Colloquially known as the "Sleeping Beauty" castle, legend has it that this castle inspired Charles Perrault to create the fairy tale of the same name. It is also believed to be among the castles that inspired the Disney castles.

After a short stop in the lovely adjacent village of Rigny-Ussé, it's back in the saddle for your return ride to Azay-le-Rideau. And what a great cool-down ride it is! You'll enjoy miles of effortless cycling along tiny roads that alternate between authentic villages, beautiful farmland, and shaded woods. Here you experience the real France where, even in the 21st century, you'll see no jarring affronts to the natural beauty of the land. Instead you'll experience the splendor of a mosaic woven between man and nature that feels right and perfect. The French are truly masters at integrating their presence with the treasure that is their beautiful land.

### **Tour Price: \$325.00 per person**

- **Children's Price** - Children 16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults: \$125.00 per child.
- **Tour Deposit:** \$150.00 per adult and \$75.00 per child. Deposits are charged when tour materials are sent and hotel availability has been confirmed.
- **Discounts** are available for parties of 5 or more adults.

#### **The tour price includes:**

- Tour Documentation: Route instructions, maps, Pre-trip Preparation Guide, On-Road Quick Reference Guide, and Sights Guide.
- Bike Rental for 2 Days: Excellent quality hybrid bike with map carrier, cyclometer, water bottle cage, rear rack, rear pannier, lock, repair kit, helmet, and on-road bike assistance. Optional pedal cages. Tandem bikes are also available. Road/racing bikes are available for a supplemental charge.
- Baggage Transfer
- Reservation of your Accommodations
- English-Speaking Support Staff
- Shipping and Handling Charges for US customers, unless expedited shipping is required.

#### **The tour price does NOT include:**

- Hotels: Because you are free to select from a wide range of hotels -- from charming and basic 2-star to 4-star luxury (where available) -- the cost of your hotel accommodations is not bundled into the tour package price. A list of accommodations options for this tour, with website links, is available upon request.
- Meals: You are free to determine your own budget for meals. A wide variety of options are available -- from creating a picnic from provisions obtained at a boulangerie / patisserie, to dining at bistros and restaurants, or taking meals at your hotel (where available.) Please note that breakfasts are NOT included in France hotel rates. However, hotels with restaurants often offer a demi-pension option, which includes the cost of your room, breakfast, and dinner at a reasonable price.
- Transportation from your home to Tours and from Azay-le-Rideau to your home
- Personal expenses
- Insurance
- Postage Charges for non-US customers: The postage required to send your tour materials by US Postal Service Priority Mail will be added to tour orders made from outside the US. This charge averages \$20.00 for delivery within 6 - 10 business days.
- Expedited Shipping (all nations): If the shipment of tour materials must be expedited, the express mail charges will be added to the tour package price

For Diverse Directions' payment terms, cancellation policy, and all terms & conditions, please see [Terms & Conditions](#).