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Trip Notes

CYCLING IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Trip code: FVD
Country: France
Amended: November 2009
Edition No: AB 2 2010
Valid from: 01 Jan 2010 - 31 Dec 2010

SELF GUIDED LEISURELY



HIGHLIGHTS

- Relaxed cycling along quiet country lanes and backroads
- Excellent food and wine of the Loire region
- Visit France's most stunning Chateaux's
- Small family run hotels full of character

SUMMARY



A relaxed week of self-guided cycling amidst the beautiful scenery, chateaux and vineyards of the UNESCO Loire Valley.

The magnificent Loire Valley is part of the UNESCO World Heritage sites and it is the outstanding cultural landscape containing historic towns and villages and great architectural monuments that justify this privilege. On this trip we visit, amongst others, the world famous Chateau de Chambord, which lies in an ocean of trees, and was originally built to reflect the king's power.

The Loire is the longest river in France, rising in the Massif Central and flowing over 1000km to the Atlantic Ocean. Along its lower reaches, the hunting grounds and lodges of kings and noblemen have grown into extraordinarily ornate chateaux. In addition to these fine buildings, the Loire valley is famous for its wine, with flourishing vineyards (collectively known as vins de Touraine) set amidst the leafy forests, green valleys and charming villages - ideal for undemanding cycling. Vineyards thrive on the fertile soil around the river and its tributaries, and many producers are well prepared to receive visitors and are more than happy for them to try a glass or two. The historic market town of Amboise, nestled under its fortified chateau, makes a perfect starting point from where we wind our way between the Loire and Cher rivers, visiting some of the prettiest chateaux along the way. With the vast majority of the

riding on easy tarmac roads with few hills this is not Le Tour de France but a pleasant pedal through one of the most beautiful corners of France.

IS THIS TRIP FOR YOU?

Cycling conditions

This is a self-guided cycling trip for those who like to cycle independently, but with back up to take out the hard work and planning. We arrange your accommodations, provide you with a map and route notes so that you can cycle at your own pace, while your bags are transported from one hotel to the next.

Av. daily ride: 30-40 km (19-25 miles) depending on routes chosen.

No. of days cycling: 6 (2 optional rides).

Terrain & route: The suggested cycling mainly follows quiet tarmac roads past villages, farms, vineyards, woodland and alongside rivers. There are no significant ascents or descents. Alternative routes are available on most days. The shorter routes are never normally longer than 35kms (except for the optional ride on day 6), and parents should decide if their children are able to cope with these distances before booking.

Cycle Safety

You should be aware that cycling of all kinds has its dangers and that accidents can happen from time to time. Please ensure that you are properly prepared for the riding you are going to undertake. Please note that helmets must be worn when riding off-road on all our cycling holidays, they are also highly recommended on road trips.

JOINING THE TRIP IN LONDON

8 days, depart London Sat or Wed, return Sat or Wed.



Take The Train

Amboise is an excellent destination to travel to by train, with few changes and a short journey from St Pancras. Once you arrive at Amboise station, the Hotel La Breche (our preferred choice) is only a 5-minute walk.

Outbound

Depart	Time	Arrive	Time
London St Pancras	09:26	Paris Nord	12:47
Paris Austerlitz	13:35	Amboise	15:52

Inbound

Depart	Time	Arrive	Time
Amboise	13:18	Paris Austerlitz	15:38
Paris Nord	17:13	London St Pancras	18:34



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Approximate return price per person: £100. Train times and prices are subject to change. Please ask one of our sales team for further details.

We recommend that you allow approximately 1 hour for travel across Paris by Metro.

It is only possible to reserve train seats **3 months before** your departure date and our sales team will be happy to book this for you in cooperation with Rail Europe.

Low cost flights to Tours

Low cost airline Ryanair flies from London Stansted to Tours. While we cannot book low cost airlines, this may be a convenient and good value option for some clients. Please visit www.ryanair.com for details. If you choose this option, allow an approximate total of £60 to cover the taxi journey from Tours to Amboise and back.

As the flight timetable may differ to our scheduled departure dates we are able to offer departures to correspond with your flights into Tours. Please request this with your Sales Consultant upon booking.

Please note the 2010 schedule will be available from November onwards - please check the Ryanair website for up-to-date details.

JOINING THE TRIP IN AMBOISE

8 days, start Amboise Day 1, end Amboise Day 8.

Itinerary start

Your trip starts at either Hotel La Breche or Hotel Bellevue in Amboise on Day 1 of the itinerary listed below. Details of how to reach the start point are given in the Final Joining Instructions. Hotel check-in times are normally from around 4pm.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

The entries in **bold** at the end of each day indicate the type of accommodation normally used (see accommodation section overleaf for key to codes) and meals included (**B**=Breakfast, **L**=Lunch, **D**=Dinner)

Day 1 Start Amboise.

You should aim to arrive any time before dinner, please advise us of your proposed arrival time if you are making your own travel arrangements. We advise you arrive before 1830hrs in order to collect your bikes from the Cycle Richard shop (open until 1830hrs and closed all day Sunday and Monday) and make any adjustments necessary with our mechanic. If you arrive on a day when the shop is closed or after the shop has closed your bikes will be delivered to the hotel. There is an allen key provided in order to adjust seat and handlebar heights however these will have been set up in advance for you.

Amboise is located right on the Loire River. On the south side of the river lies the town centre and castle, where the French kings spent their childhoods during the XV and XVI centuries. The beautiful gardens here offer splendid views of the river, and on Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout July and August there is a Son et lumière show at the castle (not included). In town there is also a museum displaying many of the inventions of Leonardo da Vinci, who spent the last few years of his life here until he died in 1519. Hotel La Breche is 200 metres from the train station and Hotel Bellevue is 20min walk. **CH (D)**



Day 2 Cycle to Fougères sur Bievres (Ride approx 23km or 48km)

We cycle away from the Loire River along peaceful country roads to the attractive village of Fougères, with its 19th century public laundry beside the river and mediaeval castle with 16th century arcaded gallery. Tonight we stay opposite the castle, which was destroyed by the English during the Hundred Years War. **CH (B,D)**

Day 3 Cycle to Bracieux (Ride approx 24km or 68km)

There is the option of a really long day for those who want to push themselves a little. Both routes are away from the main rivers (Loire and Cher) today and the options divide just after the chateau of Gué Péan, a vast castle built in the 15th and 17th centuries.

The short ride continues north through Cour Cheverny and on to Bracieux. If you wish to shorten the route a lift can be offered for the first 20km on the longer 68km ride. Please contact the local operator the evening before to arrange this. Anyone looking for a challenge can

head east deeper into the lovely rural area known as the Sologne, known for its ponds, lakes, woods and villages. Both routes end in Bracieux, a delightful small village in the heart of the Sologne and a former stop-over between Paris and the chateaux region of the Loire. Tonight we recommend treating yourself in one of the best restaurants in the whole province, 5 minutes walk from the hotel (closed on Tue and Wed). **CH (B)**

Day 4 Optional ride from Bracieux (Ride approx 23km or 45km)

Two circular rides are offered today to explore the countryside around Bracieux. The near-by village of Cour Cheverny is a perfect example of the Sologne architecture. Also, the castle here is one of the best-preserved private chateaux in France, and was a regular spot for large royal hunting parties.

North of the village lies the amazing chateau of Chambord, the masterpiece of the French renaissance, completed in 1545 and used by kings and presidents from Francis I until the 1930s. 1500 hectares of the enclosed national hunting reserve are open to the public, with viewing platforms for watching wild boar, stags, roe deer and mouflon. The route leads back through the beautiful forest to Bracieux. **CH (B)**

Day 5 Cycle to Chaumont sur Loire (Ride approx 32km or 42km)

On the way back to the Loire we pass the estate of Troussay, a fine example of a gentleman's estate of the old times in the Loire. Once at the river we can head into the royal city of Blois where Louis XII was born. This fine castle is full of history - assassinations were perpetrated here, and there are beautiful examples of different architectural styles. You can then either follow the river on a quiet backroad or strike out into the small villages nearby to arrive at the village of Chaumont sur Loire, our stop for the next two nights. **CH (B,D)**

Day 6 Optional ride from Chaumont sur Loire (Ride approx 48km or 53km)

Blois is within striking distance if you choose the longer route, a contrast to the quiet villages that have featured along the way up until now. The more energetic can explore the lanes to the south, passing through the town of Pontlevoy where the museum consists of an open-air display of information and photos that lead you on a tour of the streets. Then it's back to the broad waters of the Loire and the hotel at Chaumont. There is the option not to cycle but to relax and visit the chateau of Chaumont - this was originally built during the wars between the counts of Anjou and Blois in the 11th century on a very strategic point along the river. Remodelled and rebuilt over the centuries by various owners including Catherine de Medici, the castle is now a venue for the International Garden Festival. **CH (B)**

Day 7 Cycle to Amboise (Ride approx 35km)

The final day of cycling dawns, and there is just one route, so no tricky decisions to face over the crossroads. The landscape changes to a more open, rolling scenery for the final run-in to Amboise. The highlight of today's ride is the chateau of Chenonceaux, the most romantic of all the Loire chateaux. It actually sits in the Cher River, whose waters reflect the pale stone of the beautiful turrets and arches, and was the home of both Catherine de Medici and Diane de Poitiers. **CH (B)**



Day 8 End Amboise (B)

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation

We indicate in the itinerary what type of accommodation is provided on each day. The descriptions are guidelines only and are used to give an idea of the accommodation offered, rather than an exact description.

We stay 7 nights in 2 and 3 star family run hotels. A swimming pool is usually available on 4 nights. Please check your hotel list (sent with your final joining instructions) for confirmation.

Family of two or four - All family groupings of two and four will be put into either one or two twin rooms. How you decide to share is up to the discretion of the adults.

Family of three - Wherever possible we will put you in a triple room and there may be a small reduction for this. Please be aware that in some places triple rooms are in short supply. This means that, in practice, a triple room will often simply be a twin room with a mattress on the floor or a further bed squashed in. Where it is impossible to provide a triple room, you will have to decide which of your party takes the single room.

Family of five or more - For larger families, we will provide twin rooms as standard, with a triple room if there is an odd number.

Whilst we will do our very best to ensure that families are roomed close together (in some cases, we can arrange adjoining rooms), we can't guarantee this. Most family holidays occur during peak season and we sometimes have little to no control over where you will be put. You need to come prepared for this.

Single Accommodation

All prices are based on 2 persons sharing, therefore if there is an odd number of people travelling in your party, one person will need to take a single room, and a supplement of £160 will be charged.

KEY TO ACCOMMODATION

CH Comfortable Hotel, Lodge or Gite - twin rooms with en suite facilities, reliable electricity and water supply, good service and some added amenities.

FOOD & TRANSPORT

Food

The trip includes 7 breakfasts and 3 dinners, which are taken in the hotels. In the itinerary we state which meals are included on each day. **Please note** if you are staying at the Hotel Bellevue on day 1 you will be on bed and breakfast and on day 6 you will be on half-board basis.

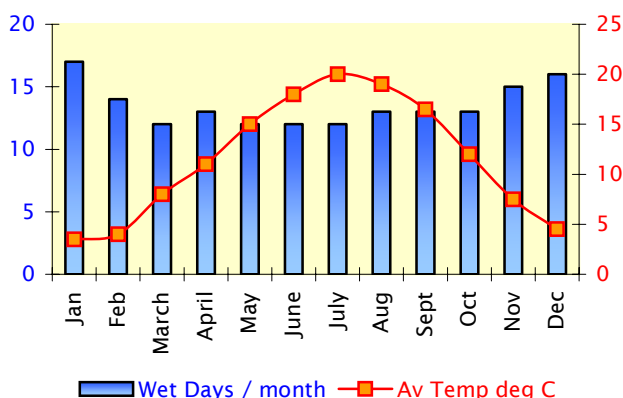
Breakfast: Continental style buffet breakfast.

Lunch (not included): Suggestions of what to do for lunch are in the cycling notes.

Dinner: Taken in the hotels and will be the standard menu for those staying on a half board basis.

WEATHER

Weather chart for Paris



The region has a northern European climate so rain is possible at any time of the year. On average there are approximately 8 rainy days per month from May-October.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Tourism can be a real help to local communities, providing income, positive cultural exchanges and a financial incentive to protect their natural environment.

Ours is a 'total approach' to responsible tourism, covering everything from the way we plan and operate our trips to the practices of Exodus as a company. Exodus trips are designed to allow a high degree of economic benefit to the local communities; we buy local produce, eat local food and use local services, thus ensuring that as much money as possible is retained within the local economies and the host communities. With our responsible tourism policy we are continually reassessing our holidays, trying at all times to ensure that they are socially, economically and environmentally sound.

Awards for our work on Responsible Tourism

2006. British Travel Awards: Environmentally Responsible Tourism Company.



2004. Responsible Travel Awards: Best Tour Operator.

2002. BA Tourism for Tomorrow Awards: Highly Commended.

For full details of our Responsible Tourism Policy please visit:

www.exodus.co.uk/responsible-travel

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Some EU nationals may travel to France using only an EU identity card. If you think this may apply to you please check with your local authorities.

Visa regulations can and do change without notice and if you are not a British passport holder please check the current regulations in good time to obtain a visa if one is required.

For information on how to obtain visas please call Travcour on 020 7223 5295 or visit their website: www.travcour.com

Vaccinations and Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad.

There are no statutory vaccination requirements if you are travelling from the UK. If you are travelling from elsewhere you should check with the nearest Embassy or consulate for current regulations. Please note that tetanus and polio vaccinations are currently recommended for all countries. Please consult your doctor or vaccination centre for up-to-date information.

The above information can change at short notice, and as we are not qualified to answer all your questions in regards to travel health we strongly recommend you contact your GP or a Travel Health Clinic at least 8 weeks prior to departure for up-to-date information.

Nomad Travel Clinics are experts in preparing people for travel, providing expert advice on vaccinations, anti-malarial and staying healthy whilst overseas. We have arranged a special 10% discount for Exodus passengers on any vaccinations that you may require! Take along your Nomad discount card, sent with your confirmation pack, or call Exodus for your special discount code.

Visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/exodus for further information.

For additional information please visit: www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk

Insurance - Are you adequately covered?

Please ask for details of the Exodus insurance policy that has been tailored to provide specific cover for our trips. It is a condition of joining any of our holidays that you must be insured against medical and personal accident risks (to include repatriation costs and air ambulance or helicopter rescue services where appropriate). If taking an alternative policy you must be sure that you are covered for any activities that are part of this trip or optional activities that you intend to take part in. For further information please see the insurance section of the Exodus Travel Advice guide or visit www.exodus.co.uk/about-exodus/travel-insurance.

Local Time is GMT +1hr

Group, Staff and Support

As this is a self-guided holiday there is no group and no leader. Your luggage is transferred and route notes and maps are provided. The routes notes contain a 24-hour emergency assistance telephone number. In emergency, the hotels are normally able to dispatch a taxi or pick you up themselves. They may wish to charge for this service.

The minimum age of clients on this trip is 3 years. Anyone under 18 years must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Join the Exodus Online Community:

Don't forget to visit the Community area on our website. You can view our range of Exodus videos and podcasts, read trip write-ups that have

featured in the national media and take advantage of some special deals on travel gear and equipment.

In the Compass Café forum you'll find the Departure Lounge where you can discuss your trip with fellow travellers before you depart. When you get back from your holiday remember to upload your images to the relevant trip page on our website. This helps other people see what our holidays are really like and you'll be automatically entered into our monthly photo competition.

To make full use of the Compass Cafe you'll need to join My Exodus. It's free, registration is simple and easy... so what are you waiting for?

<http://www.exodus.co.uk/community>

Bike Hire

Please provide us with heights of each member of your party so we can arrange the right size bikes to be available. 'In-country' bike hire should be arranged on booking, and the cost will be added to your invoice.

21-speed bikes cost £80 for adults and £60 for children. Trailer bikes (only recommended for ages: 3-6 years) are available at a cost of £60.

We do not recommend that you take a bike from the UK, as it is not easy to transport them on France's train network.

All adult bikes have front bag and 2 rear panniers. One of the adult front bags will have either a map holder or plastic folder for your route notes and maps. There are no panniers supplied for the child bikes. We also supply 1 repair kit per 2 people (1 spare inner tube), a pump, lock and sealant spray to fix inner tube. Front and rear lights are supplied.

Bike Repairs

As you are riding unaccompanied, it is wise to know at least how to repair or change an inner tube before setting off on your bike! The bikes are serviced before being rented out so there should be no problems – however, there are emergency numbers provided in the Route Notes for more complex problems.

MONEY MATTERS

Exodus and Local Payments

There is no local payment on this holiday. If you are comparing prices with other operators, please check the total price paid, as we believe that Exodus offers the best balance between value for money and operational quality.

Currency Information

The national currency of France is the Euro, with an exchange rate of approximately 0.70 to the US\$ and 1.15 to the UK£. Exchange rates are correct at the time of publication.

ATM availability

Please try to obtain some of your spending money in cash before you leave the UK, as there are limited opportunities to get to a bank during the week. Please see the 'Extra Expenses' section below for details of how much spending money you may need. In most European countries you can get local currency from a Cash Machine (ATM) with a Visa credit card, located in major towns. Credit cards are also accepted in most places you visit however cash is easier.

Extra Expenses and Spending Money

You need some change for the metro/RER in Paris (3-4 euros). Entrance fees to the Chateaux are not included and usually cost around □5 - 7.50 per person. For lunches and dinners not included allow about □150 depending on the standard of restaurant chosen. You may need extra if you intend to buy wine at the table each evening.

For your commission free holiday currency, pre loaded cash cards and travellers cheques delivered directly to your door at very competitive rates, visit us on www.currency-express.com/exodus and receive free delivery on orders over £300.

WHAT TO TAKE

Essential Equipment and Clothing

This should be read in conjunction with our 'What to Pack' section in the Travel Advice booklet.

You will need the following: Helmet, eye-protection (sunglasses), cycling gloves, and water bottles or hydration system (e.g. camelbak).

Optional items: Padded cycling shorts (with loose 'over-shorts' where recommended), breathable clothing, and a lightweight waterproof / windproof top. Shoes with relatively stiff soles are better for biking, but are not essential unless you are cycling long distances. We also recommend sunscreen and swimming things.

Most people want to carry certain items with them during the day, for this we recommend a large bum-bag or small close-fitting daysack. You may also like to bring your own saddle (excluding the seat post), over gel cover to fit to the hire bikes. We encourage this, if it is your preference.

Much of the equipment mentioned above is available at very competitive prices at the Exodus online shop, '[Exodus Travel Essentials](http://www.exodus.co.uk/community)' in partnership with Amazon. Please visit www.exodus.co.uk/community for more information.

Baggage and Baggage Allowance

When travelling on Eurostar you can take up to 2 big bags onto the train. You don't need to check it in – just take it straight onto the train.

READING LIST

Cycling Southern France: Loire to Mediterranean is available at www.cordee.co.uk

Map(s) A copy of the Orleans – Tours map (No. 26) of L'institut Geographique National Serie Bleu (Scale 1:100,000) will be sent along with your final joining instructions.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL CLIENTS

Please note that Exodus operate a 24 hour duty office for emergencies, which can be contacted on 0044 (0) 1582 644 100.

Anytime that you travel abroad you should take the time to read the warnings in the essential information in the brochure or at www.exodus.co.uk/about-exodus/essential-information

Full joining instructions including local emergency numbers, and details of how to reach the start point, will be sent to you approximately 2 to 3 weeks prior to departure. If you do not receive these at least a week before departure, or require them earlier please contact our office or your travel agent.

On all trips the staff are there to help ensure the holiday runs as smoothly as possible and, in the unlikely event that it does not, to sort out the best possible alternatives. What they cannot do is act as child minders or babysitters; they will treat your children as 'young adults', but it is your responsibility to look after your young ones. During free time or if you decide to opt out of part of the itinerary, you are responsible for your family and any arrangements that need to be made. Under no circumstances should this responsibility fall on our staff or any of your fellow travellers outside of your immediate family.

Occasionally, as stated in our brochure, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best alternative arrangements possible that maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith, and covers the average range of conditions likely to be found on this trip. Where differences exist in the information between these Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes are the correct version and supersede the brochure. Abnormal conditions or other events beyond our control can prevail at any time, particularly in remote or off the beaten track destinations, therefore all holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; in order to enjoy them you should be prepared to be flexible where necessary.

HOW TO BOOK YOUR TRIP

- 1. Check availability** Go online to check availability, or contact us by phone or email.
- 2. Secure your place** You can provisionally hold a place on this trip, usually for between three and seven days.
- 3. Complete your booking and payment** When you're ready to book, go to www.exodus.co.uk for online booking, book over the phone or you can complete a booking form (available online or on request by calling us). We accept all major credit and debit cards, or you can pay by cheque.

Book with confidence Exodus is fully licensed and bonded as a tour operator. We hold Air Traffic Organisers Licence (ATOL) number 2582 issued and bonded with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). We are also bonded to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and we are members of the Federation of Tour Operators (FTO) and ABTA - The Travel Association. This means you can book your Exodus holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected.

