

Kat's Great Adventures

France – Castles on the Loire River Bicycle Tour 2022
Self-Guided Tour
10 Days / 9 Nights OR 8 Days / 7 Nights



This cycling tour leads you into the romantic Loire valleys and its tributaries, into the 'Garden of France' and is totally characterised by royal residences built here centuries ago. Kings, overlords and court ladies seduced by the scenic allure of the region, took up residence here – and left their marks. Which are best followed by bike: Villandry with its marvellous grounds, the 'Sleeping Beauty Palace' Usse, the royal abbey of Fontevraud, which was at times used as a prison, the spectacular Chenonceaux palace, built on top of the fountains of a watermill situated directly on the river Cher.... One fascinating, one-of-a-kind building followed by the next. In between vineyards and wine villages oozing rural charm cover the area. Adventurous cyclists get their money's worth and take plenty of time especially for Chambord palace and the numerous sights of Blois and Amboise. Without any pressure you cycle from palace to palace, delight in the stupendous architecture and revel in the royal sense of life of a region, where the wealthy and powerful of days gone by used to abandon themselves to idleness and where you too will feel just like you live in clover.

Itinerary Day to Day

8 Days / 7 Nights

Day 1: Arrival in Tours

In the late afternoon is the welcome briefing and handing over of the rental bikes.



Day 2: Tours – Chinon 50 km

The river Cher leads you directly to the castle Villandry with its terraced gardens. Visiting these renowned grounds is a must. Paths to stroll on in the shade, arcades covered in floral splendour, fountains and the ornately arranged vegetable gardens amazes each and every visitor. A few kilometres onwards you swap the Cher riverbanks with the Loire, and again the next palace beckons: Langeais. A glance from the fortified tower (this palace was exclusively used for military purposes) and in front of you spreads the river and the entire surrounding region. At the edge of the dark and mysterious forest of Chinon rises Usee palace, the 'Sleeping Beauty Palace'. Via small villages and on side roads you will reach today's destination – Chinon.

Day 3: Loop tour Fontevraud l'Abbaye 55 km

The Vienne escorts you first in the small village of Candes-St-Martin. At the place of death of Saint Martin an amazing Romanesque church was built. In Montsoreau the river Vienne joins the mighty river Loire – an impressive nature spectacle. The 'Cave Gardens' feature a length of over 800 kilometres. You cycle through neat vineyards to Fontevraud l'Abbaye. Nowhere else in the world will you come across a medieval monastery complex so completely preserved as Fontevraud. Now follow a 'literary return journey' to Chinon. Your route leads you past the birth place of the distinguished author Francois Rabelais, as well as through the valley where the plot of his famous book 'Gargantua' takes place.



Day 4: Chinon – Azay-le-Rideau 40 km

You leave Chinon with its medieval alleys clustered between river and castle headed north. The route leads you through old vineyards and remote villages to Crissay, with its houses dating back to the 15th century it is considered to be one of the most beautiful villages in France. Naturally again today you get to marvel at yet another palace, in fact a grade A specimen: Azay-le-Rideau, a renaissance palace featuring peak perfection. 'A diamond with a thousand facets, set by the river Indre', according to the words of Balzac. What else is there to say? You spend the night directly in the village and hence have the opportunity to enjoy the magic of the palace together with its cultural events.

Day 5: Azay-le-Rideau – Chenonceaux 60 km

There is another highlight in ahead: through the romantic river landscape always following the river Indre you reach the pretty little town of Montbazou. A short ascent awaits, a few hard pushes into the pedals and you have tackled the little ridge into the Cher river valley. On a long path across meadows you cycle along the river Cher to Blere, a little market town and then onwards to your history charged finish with the palace of Chenonceaux. Chenonceaux palace is probably the most beautiful of all the Loire palaces and rises from a one-of-a-kind location. A splendid, two storey bridge gallery spans across the river and before that is the stunning castle garden to marvel at...but please discover it for yourself.



Day 6: Chenonceaux – Blois 50 - 80 km

Today you have to choose between two tour variants: the shorter stage takes you through the lovely landscape of the Touraine to the Castle Chaumont, and then on romantic paths along the Loire to Blois. After moving into your hotel room you will go out on a reconnaissance! The Castle Blois with its galleries, projected balconies and bay windows could be your destination. Or there is a second, longer variant for all lovers of the Loire Castles: via Montrichard, Cheverny, Villesavine to the Castle Chambord. As far as the eye can see the 'Domaine de Chambord' stretched here. Already from a distance, you can see the walls of the biggest and most magnificent residence on the Loire shimmering through the trees. It is the immortal legacy of the disloyal king. You are spoiled for choice!

Day 7: Blois – Tours 75 km

The river flows between the gold shimmering sandbanks in a leisurely manner. Typical of this area are the rock housings, which are directly built into the soft lime stones. Sometimes, only the rising smoke reveals their existence. You cross the Loire in order to appreciate the most royal of all the Loire Castles: Castle Ambois. It accommodated five kings and a Roman emperor. In addition, a genius of the 16th century attracts your attention – Leonardo da Vinci, who spent his last years in Ambois. On the Loire Cycle Path you keep cycling on to Tours. Alternatively take the train (independently) from Amboise and hence cut the stage short by about 30 km.

Day 8: Departure or Extension

C'est la vie – it's funny the way things turn out. But today your biking tour to the Loire Castles is finished. After having a last substantial breakfast you have to say goodbye to the most delightful region in France!



Itinerary Day to Day

10 Days / 9 Nights

Day 1: Arrival in Tours

Day 2: Tours –Chinon 50 km

Day 3: Loop Tour Fontevraud l'Abbaye 55 km

Day 4: Chinon – Azay-le-Rideau 40 km

Day 5: Azay-le-Rideau –Chenonceaux 60 km

Day 6: Chenonceaux – Blois 50 km

This tour leads you through the pretty scenery of the Touraine to Chaumont castle and from there you proceed along romantic paths along the Loire River to Blois. After settling into your accommodation you embark on an exploration tour. Blois palace with its galleries, protruding balconies, bay windows and aspen could be your destination.



Day 7: Loop tour to the castle of Chambord 50 km

Today is mostly dedicated to Chambord palace. Already from a distance this largest and most stupendous residence on the Loire River is shimmering through the trees. You get a very good idea of the incredible dimensions of the complex if you cycle around the palace along the canal. Just the park is as large as the 20 districts of Paris and is surrounded by a 35 km long wall. Half a millennium of French history in Chambord has left its mark: built in the Renaissance are under the art loving King Francois I., a venue for glittering parties and hunting festivities under 'le Roi Soleil' Ludwig XIV., plundered during the French Revolution and today after Versailles, the second most visited palace in France, a legacy of a disloyal king. You are spoilt for choice!

Day 8: Blois – Amboise 45 km

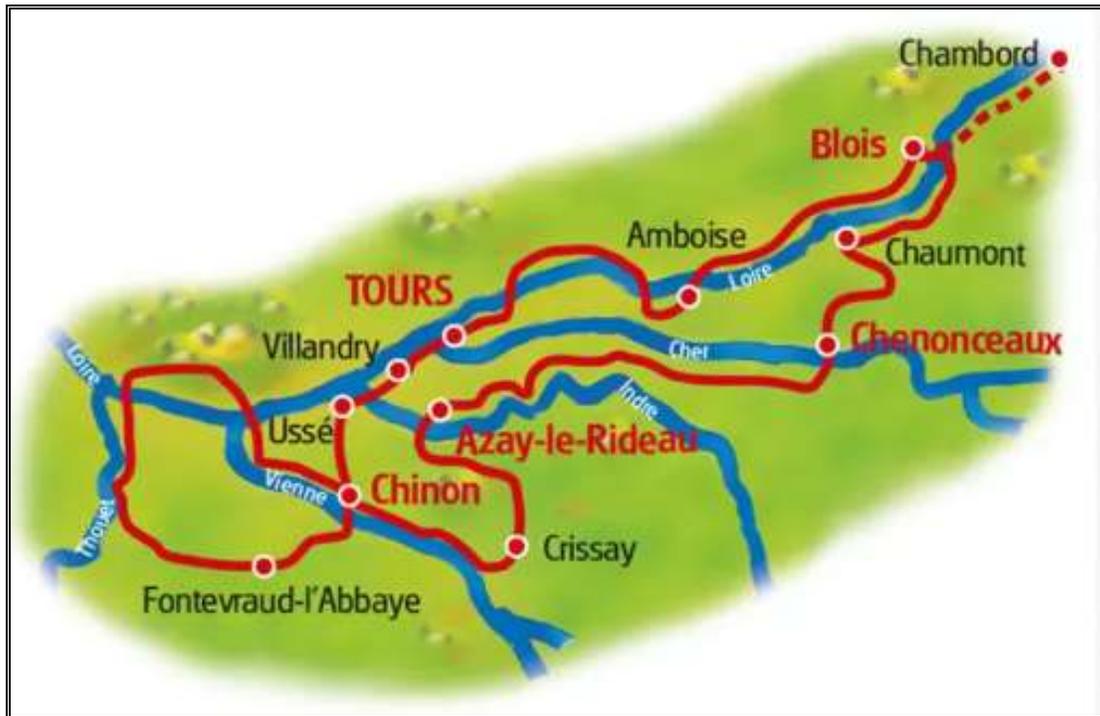
The Loire cycle path leads you from Blois to Chaumont-sur-Loire. The palace here has never been a royal residence and is hence a bit of an insider tip. It is a sight to see mainly due to the giant park, the annual venue for an international garden show. You end your day in Amboise, whose palace is an especially early example for Renaissance architecture in the Loire Valley. One of the greatest artists of this era found his final resting place here: the town house Clos Lucé attached to the castle is very much dedicated to the memory of Leonardo da Vinci.

Day 9: Amboise – Tours 30 km

The final stage of your cycling tour leads you once more into the vineyards on the slopes above the Loire River, into the wine-growing area Montlouis-sur-Loire and the little town with the same name with its idyllic location on the river. Here we recommend a short break before you continue again along the riverbank back to Tours.

Day 10: Departure or extension

Route



Technical Characteristics:

Route Profile: Medium. Mainly flat on cycle paths and low traffic secondary roads with almost consistently very good signposting. The terrain in the vineyards is somewhat hillier and there are also a few short ascents to tackle.

Distance: 8 Day Variation: 335 km
10 Day Variation: 385 km

Travel Season: Departures Thursdays and Saturdays from April 9 to October 8, 2022
Season 1: April 9 – April 22 and October 1 – October 8
Season 2: April 23 – May 20 and September 10 – September 30
Season 3: May 21 – September 9



Price per Person:

	8 Days / 7 Nights		10 Days / 9 Nights	
	Category A	Category B	Category A	Category B
Double Occupancy B&B Season 1	€ 829.00	€ 729.00	€ 1029.00	€ 879.00
Double Occupancy B&B Season 2	€ 879.00	€ 779.00	€ 1099.00	€ 939.00
Double Occupancy B&B Season 3	€ 929.00	€ 829.00	€ 1129.00	€ 979.00
Surcharge Single Occupancy	€ 299.00	€ 299.00	€ 399.00	€ 379.00
Hybrid Bike PLUS (including insurance)	€ 139.00	€ 139.00	€ 155.00	€ 155.00
Rental Electric Bike (including insurance)	€ 199.00	€ 199.00	€ 219.00	€ 219.00
Extra Nights Tours Double Occupancy B&B	€ 65.00			
Extra Nights Tours Single Occupancy B&B	€ 110.00			

Accommodation:

Category A: 3* hotels of the French classification

Category B: 2* and 3* hotels of the French classification

Included:

- Accommodation in your selected category
- Breakfast buffet
- Welcome briefing
- Luggage transfer between hotels
- Excellently planned routes
- Detailed travel documents 1 per room (route maps, route description, local attractions, important telephone numbers)
- App for navigation and GPS data is available
- Service hotline

Not Included:

- Local taxes payable locally

Bikes



Hybrid Bike

Rental Bike Plus allows for a slightly sportier sitting posture, 27 gears offer the highest flexibility and a high quality Suntour suspension fork provides the best possible comfort across all surfaces.

Available in 63/60/56-51 sloping/46 cm sizes

Also includes Saddle bag (water-repellent), handlebar bag (water-repellent), service-Set with tools and extra bicycle tube, pump and combination lock



Electric Bike

You need no driver's license, the electric bike assists up to a speed of 25 km/h. The handling is easy and manageable after a short explanation. These bikes are supported through an electric motor that is fixed in the bottom bracket. The supply of energy takes place through a removable battery, which permits a reach of 120-180 kilometers.

Sizes: 56/51/46/46 "xs" cm