

iPod Traveller

"The Best in European Travel"



▲ Andrea Petzko!

Chateaux of the Loire

Overview

France's Loire River has long provided an exceptional place for fun, romance, and recreation. Since the Middle Ages, heads of state and wealthy aristocracy have made this area their personal playground, leaving the current countryside dotted with magnificent castles and grandiose gardens. To add to the fun, the soil is rendered particularly fertile by the flow of the river, thereby producing some of the world's best-loved wines. To this day, the Loire Valley makes the perfect weekend escape or prolonged romantic holiday.

Our Suggested Itinerary:

Spend your nights in Tours, and take short train rides to the castles of Chenonceau, Amboise, and Blois. (Alternatively, you can stay in Blois for a night on your way home.) Stationing yourself in Tours allows you time to see the city itself, as well as a chance to watch the French countryside roll gracefully past your train window.

What To See

Tours

Place Plumereau: This dainty square is full of restaurants and 15th century houses. At night, it comes alive with students out for a night of clubbing and reverie.

Cathédrale St. Gatien: Construction of the cathedral began in the fourth century, with various additions and innovations added since. One of the most dazzling parts of the cathedral is the array of stained glass windows that awaits visitors inside. These visual delights have been part of the cathedral since as early as the 13th century.

Make sure to pick up the pamphlets at the entrances to the castles for in-depth tours of the rooms and detailed accounts of each castle's history.

Castles

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Chenonceau - Chenonceau has been historically inhabited and operated by royal wives and mistresses. Diane de Poitiers, Catherine de Medici, and Louise de Lorraine all lived in, and left their marks on, Chenonceau.

The castle is physically built into the River Cher, providing spectacular views from the castle windows, as well as stunning portraits from the outside. The gardens and parks stretch along the banks of the Cher and around the castle. There are plenty of picnic areas to choose from, as well as a small café next to the castle itself.

Amboise - The town and castle of Amboise lie directly south of the Loire River. Amboise has more history than most other castles, dating back to King Clovis in 503. Architecturally speaking, Amboise pleasantly mixes pieces of Gothic and Renaissance styles, particularly in the roof windows. The charming view of the city and river from the top of the chateau is not to be missed.

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Blois

The city of Blois rests on the north bank of the Loire, halfway to Orléans. (This makes it a perfect stop on the way back to Paris from Tours.)

The chateau of Blois is built around a single square courtyard. What makes Blois particularly intriguing is the very obvious compilation of architectural styles. Each of the wings of the four-part castle directly corresponds to one of the following four styles: Gothic, Flamboyant, Renaissance, and Classicism. While the ornate Renaissance staircase, (built by François I), is always a favorite, the visual embodiment of architectural history unfolding before your eyes is a sight unto itself.



"The bedchamber of Louise de Lorraine, - she never stopped mourning

Visitor Links

Loire Valley Tourist Board

<http://www.loirevalleytourism.com>

Discover France

<http://www.discoverfrance.com/regions/loire.html>

France for visitors - castle guide

<http://france-for-visitors.com/loire/which-chateaux.html>

Chateaux Links

► Featured on iPod Traveller

Chenonceau

<http://www.chenonceau.com/>

Amboise

www.amboise-valdeloire.com

Blois

<http://www.loiredeschateaux.com/>



One of many castles in the Loire valley

Travel Links

► Rail

SNCF Bookings

<http://www.voyages-sncf.com>

Eurostar

<http://www.eurostar.com>

► Air

Ryanair

<http://www.ryanair.com>

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