

FAMILY BIKING ITINERARY
PREMIERE INN TRIP

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Loire Valley

A JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE'S REGAL TOURAINE

TO RESERVE YOUR
TRIP CALL
800-462-2848 OR
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Important Facts
at a glance

6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS

Click [here](#) for departure dates
and pricing details

ROUTE RATING

Levels 1–5

See [below](#) for details.

Just southwest of Paris lies an elegant refined domain, where magnificent châteaux sleep on the banks of lazy rivers and vineyards stretch alongside gently rolling fields and forests. The Loire Valley is synonymous with opulent castles, sun-splashed countryside and the decadence of French kings and queens. It's an area rich with history and brimming with tales of passion and intrigue, worthy of the latest best-selling novel. Love, murder, greed, jealousy and power all played a hand in the creation and destruction of these immense castles. Here you and your family will bike along peaceful rural roads accompanied by the sound of the wind rustling the trees, eagerly anticipating your first glimpse of one of these fabled castles. Add sumptuous accommodations with meticulously landscaped grounds and Michelin-starred cuisine, and you'll be living like royalty in no time.

DAY 1

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) in **Tours** at **10:30 a.m.** at the front entrance of the **main train station** (not the St-Pierre des Corps train station). **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes, or have them packed in a separate bag so you can change before the ride, and have your rain gear handy.** See "Arriving & Departing" for more logistics information.

SHUTTLE TO VOUVRAY 30 MINUTES

VOUVRAY WARM-UP ROUTE 15 MILES

Welcome to the Loire Valley! After meeting, we shuttle to a family-owned winery set among fruit trees in the famous wine region of Vouvray. Vintner Daniel Jarry leads us on a tour of the grounds, including the cellar, housed in a beautiful cave. Daniel has decorated the *cave* with interesting glass bottles he's collected from around the world; kids: can you find the Eiffel Tower or the guitar among them?

After a picnic à-la-Backroads, your Trip Leaders fit you to your bike and give a brief demonstration of riding techniques and safety. The rest of the afternoon is yours to explore the wooded back roads and small villages that make bicycling in the Loire Valley such a delight. This evening, settle in at Le Choiseul, an elegant 18th-century manor house ideally situated in Amboise, a lively town on the banks of the Loire River. We later gather for a wine (and juice!) reception, followed by dinner at the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant, which overlooks the river and gardens. *Lodging: Le Choiseul*

DAY 2

CHAUMONT LOOP 30 MILES

FAMILY OPTION: CHATEAU DE CHAUMONT 13 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: SEILLAC 39 MILES

KIDS VISIT TO FANTASY FOREST

Today's ride begins with a brief stretch (and good climb out of town) to Clos Lucé, the house where Leonardo da Vinci spent the final four years of his life. Its museum contains

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RECOGNIZED YEAR IN
AND YEAR OUT AS
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
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Our Accommodations
Premiere Inns

LE CHOISEUL

(2 nights) This 18th-century manor house, a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, has a Michelin-starred restaurant and a swimming pool.

Amboise

phone: 33-(0)2-47-30-45-45
www.choiseul.com

DOMAINE DE LA TORTINIÈRE

(2 nights) A charming 19th-century château with impressive views of the surrounding countryside, a lavish dining room, a heated pool and the gracious hospitality of the Olivereau family.

Montbazon

phone: 33-(0)2-47-34-35-00
www.tortiniere.com

CHATEAU DE MARCAY

(1 night) Turrets and secret passageways attest to the medieval origins of this Relais & Châteaux—member hotel, which features a restaurant, wine cellar, swimming pool and tennis courts.

Chinon

phone: 33-(0)2-47-93-03-47
www.chateaudemarcay.com

**EACH YEAR,
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR
GUESTS HAVE
PREVIOUSLY
TRAVELED WITH US OR
BEEN REFERRED BY
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

designs and models of the machines conceived by da Vinci, including an airplane, helicopter, parachute and turning bridge. Back on your bike, it's a comfortable rolling stretch to Château Chaumont, where you'll hear the tales of this castle's long and sordid past dating to the 10th century. Lunch today is on your own; enjoy a *pique-nique* in the château's splendid garden or choose one of the charming restaurants in the village of Chaumont.

This afternoon's undulating bicycle route takes you over the plateaus north of the Loire River back to Amboise. Then kids are in for a treat as they're whisked off to the Fantasy Forest, an amusement park set among the trees. This leaves you time to explore the lively town and check out its 15th-century château, which held the court of François I at the apex of the French Renaissance. Tonight savor another memorable meal at Le Choiseul while kids take it easy at their own special dinner in town. *Lodging: Le Choiseul*

DAY 3

CHATEAU DE NITRAY ROUTE 22 MILES

FAMILY OPTION: CHENONCEAU 8 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: MONTBAZON 44 MILES

After tackling the steep climb out of Amboise once more, ride the pleasant country roads past cozy hamlets to the most famous of Loire Valley châteaux: Château de Chenonceau. Spanning the Cher River, Chenonceau features vast gardens, airy galleries, magnificent fireplaces, 16th-century Flemish tapestries and paintings by Rubens and Rigaud. In the chapel, a bas-relief of Madonna and child hangs amid two centuries of graffiti carved into the walls. Catherine de'Medici and Diane de Poitiers were among the women who reigned here. Each wife, mistress and queen added personal touches to the elaborately decorated and designed château, and it became known as the "Château of Six Women." While you take a guided tour, kids explore the castle with the Kid Coordinator, checking out the massive chimney in the kitchen as well as the mysterious black room. If weather permits, kids may be able to take boats out to see the château from the water, or try to find their way out of the labyrinth on the castle grounds.

Hop back on the saddle to take in more glorious scenery—and a few hills for kicks. You'll pass Château de Nitray, a 15th-century castle, as you ride away from the Cher River, past small towns and across pastoral land, stopping for a catered lunch along the way. For more miles, spin to Montbazon, or enjoy the lovely views from the Backroads van. As we explore France's castle country, it's only fitting that we stay in our own château, the 19th-century Domaine de la Tortinière. Nestled in a 38-acre park stretching to the Indre River (a tributary of the Loire), this storybook castle features a wonderful blend of traditional and contemporary décor. This evening you'll dine on excellent regional cuisine at the hotel. *Lodging: Domaine de la Tortinière*

DAY 4

VILLANDRY ROUTE 36 MILES

FAMILY OPTION: SACHE 24 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: SORIGNY ROUTE 47 MILES

Ride through vineyards and villages outside of Montbazon to the town of Villandry, where you can visit the 16th-century Château de Villandry, surrounded by some of France's most exquisite gardens. The castle was acquired in the early 1900s by Joachim de Carvalho, who restored the gardens to their original Renaissance grandeur. Today, it's Carvalho's grandson who tends to the grounds, although he was once heard to lament, "The gardens cost my



Top Reasons Why you should take this trip

We provide a variety of route options so you can do as much or as little activity as you like each day.

You'll stay in the area's finest hotels, each carefully selected based on our rigorous quality standards.

You'll enjoy the best of the region's cuisine, as well as Backroads' trademark grand picnics.

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

children a good education and caused my wife a nervous breakdown.” The spectacular patchwork of greenery includes a water garden within a circle of lime trees; an ornamental garden, where yew, boxwood and flowers are planted in symbolic patterns; and a kitchen garden, with decorative geometric beds.

Continuing on, ride through the Forêt de Villandry to the town of Saché, known for its château and famous visitors. Sculptor Alexander Calder spent time in Saché and one of his stables remains in the town square. Honoré de Balzac stayed at the 16th-century Château de Saché while he wrote his dramatic love story *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, set here in the Indre Valley. The château now houses the Balzac Museum, which recreates the tranquil 19th-century rooms of his home and displays some of his work. We enjoy a signature Backroads picnic here on the château's peaceful grounds. Tonight, adults are treated to an exceptional meal at our hotel, while the youngsters head into town for their own special kid-friendly dinner. *Lodging: Domaine de la Tortinière*

DAY 5

AZAY AND USSE ROUTE 33 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

FAMILY OPTION: AZAY-LE-RIDEAU 23 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: CHINON 40 MILES

KIDS VISIT TO LA VALLEE TROGLODYTIQUE DES GOUPILLIERES

Follow a peaceful route through forests, rolling hills and orchards to Azay-le-Rideau, a riverside town renowned for its château, one of the most magnificent in France. As if floating on the tranquil surface of the Indre River, Château d'Azay-le-Rideau strikes an imposing figure with its decorative turrets and ornamented machicolations. The interior is equally splendid, with a grand central staircase (innovative in its time), beautifully restored period furniture, tapestries and family portraits. Stop for lunch at one of Azay-le-Rideau's charming cafés or fill your bike bag with local delicacies for a picnic down the road. Then get ready to feast your eyes on the Château d'Ussé, the 15th-century fairy-tale castle that inspired Charles Perrault's classic *Sleeping Beauty*.

Now that the kids have a taste of how the wealthy lived, they head off this afternoon with the Kid Coordinator to visit La Vallée Troglodytique des Goupillières and learn about peasant life. This settlement is no ordinary hamlet—from the Middle Ages to the turn of the 20th century, farmers inhabited these subterranean cave dwellings, which were carved out of the rock face to provide protection from bandits. Today the only sounds that disturb this idyllic setting come from the stables, which serve as a petting zoo.

Shuttle or bike to Chinon, a peaceful town known as much for its excellent wines as for its turbulent past. You can stop to explore the ruins of Château de Chinon, where Joan of Arc first met Charles VII in 1429 and persuaded him to let her lead an army to Orléans. Or if you'd rather settle into tonight's hotel, continue directly to Château de Marçay. Transformed into a magnificent hotel with modern-day luxuries, including an outdoor pool, stellar cuisine and an impressive wine cellar, the château's towers, turrets and period furnishings tell tales of times long ago. This evening wear comfortable shoes and dress warmly for a tour of the hotel's *cave*. You'll learn how Chinon's full-bodied red and dry white wines are produced and taste the end product. Afterward we sit down to a sumptuous meal in the dining room overlooking the French countryside. *Lodging: Château de Marçay*

WHEN YOU SIGN UP
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL
RECEIVE A
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAVEL PLANNER
WITH ALL THE
INFORMATION YOU
NEED TO PLAN
AND PREPARE



Route Rating to map your activity level

Backroads' route rating system is the most comprehensive and accurate in the travel industry. To find out how these ratings translate into varying levels of physical challenge and activity, please visit our Web site www.backroads.com and select the route rating button for the trip of your choice.

LEVEL 1
10–20 miles/day
2–3 hours/day

LEVEL 2
21–30 miles/day
2–4 hours/day

LEVEL 3
31–40 miles/day
3–5 hours/day

LEVEL 4
41–55+ miles/day
4–6 hours/day

LEVEL 5
56–75+ miles/day
5–7+ hours/day

On this Family Trip, our routes follow gentle terrain with no significant gain or loss in elevation. Liberal van shuttling is incorporated into the itinerary to facilitate our activities and mileage is kept moderate to enable you to spend more time exploring on your own

**ASK FOR REFERENCES
FROM PAST GUESTS
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE
TRIP THAT INTERESTS
YOU**

DAY 6

CHATEAU DE MARCAY LOOP 15 MILES

SHUTTLE TO TOURS TRAIN STATION 40 MINUTES

Feel free to take one last spin around the castle-dotted countryside. Enjoy the breeze as you pedal through the numerous farms and small villages. Pass close to the home of famous French writer François Rabelais and spot the privately owned castles of Coudray and Coudray Montpensier. Afterward, a private coach takes us back to the main train station in Tours, where the trip ends. Please see “Arriving & Departing” for end-of-trip logistics.

ARRIVING & DEPARTING

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change. **PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.**

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders at **10:30 a.m. at the main Tours train station**. Look for a leader wearing a Backroads T-shirt at the front entrance. **Note: we don't pick up at the St-Pierre des Corps train station, also in Tours.** If you arrive at St-Pierre des Corps, you'll need to take a commuter train to the main Tours station (a 5- to 10-minute trip). Transportation options to Tours are outlined below. **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes or have them packed in a separate bag so you can change before the ride, and have your rain gear handy.**

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, our private coach arrives at the main train station in Tours around noon, in time for you to catch an afternoon train to Paris or another destination.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

We recommend flying into Paris and then taking a train to Tours. For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

WHERE TO FIND CURRENT INFORMATION ON PARIS AIRPORTS

Visit www.adp.fr, the Aéroports de Paris Web site, for details on all transportation options to and from Roissy-Charles de Gaulle and Orly Airports. The site also includes maps of the airports' terminals as well as up-to-date security advisories.

TRANSPORTATION TO THE MAIN TRAIN STATION IN TOURS

From central Paris: You can catch one of the regularly scheduled TGV (*train à grande vitesse* or high-speed train) departures from Paris' Montparnasse Station (Gare de Montparnasse). Note that you may be required to change trains in St-Pierre des Corps—if so, look for the *navette* (small train) right across the platform that leaves about every 10 minutes. Travel time to Tour is about 1 hour, 10 minutes, and ticket prices start at around



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

\$55–\$70, plus the additional reservations charge. Reservations are required.

From Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport: It's also possible to take the TGV from the airport to Tours. You will be required to change trains in St-Pierre des Corps. There are several daily departures, and the trip takes about 2 hours. Prices start at around \$70, plus the additional reservations charge. Reservations are required.

See the following pages for details on purchasing tickets, making reservations and more.

TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN ROISSY-CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT (CDG) AND CENTRAL PARIS

Taxi: The fare to central Paris is about \$70, with an additional \$2 per piece of luggage. Fares increase after 7 p.m. and on Sundays and holidays. Although the airport is just 15 miles outside of central Paris, the trip into the city often takes 50–60 minutes because of traffic.

Door-to-door shuttle: This is a convenient and stress-free way to reach your Paris destination. Service is provided at a fixed price, generally around \$30–\$40 per person, depending on how many people are in your group. Reservations are required. You can also reserve a private shuttle; the price is based on the number of passengers. If you're traveling with a bicycle, please let the shuttle service know in advance and be sure to inquire about any additional charges for oversized luggage. We recommend **Airport Connection** (www.airport-connection.com; phone: 33-(0)1-43-65-55-55).

Air France Coach and Roissybus: Air France buses provide service from all terminals to several specific locations in central Paris, including L'Arc de Triomphe, Gare de Montparnasse and Gare de Lyon. Buses leave every 15–30 minutes (depending on your destination) from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.; single, one-way fares are \$17. Tickets can be purchased at the Air France Coach ticket office at the airport or from the driver. For schedules, specific pick-up/drop-off locations and prices in English, please call the Air France Coach at 33-(0)8-92-35-08-20 or visit www.cars-airfrance.com.

The Paris Transit Authority's (RATP) Roissybus offers service between the airport and Place de l'Opéra (at the corner of rue Scribe) every 15 minutes from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Cost per person is approximately \$12. Travel time to central Paris ranges from 30 minutes to well over an hour, depending on traffic. Visit www.ratp.info/informer/anglais; or phone Roissybus at 33-(0)1-48-04-18-24.

TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN ORLY (ORY) AIRPORT AND CENTRAL PARIS

Taxi: Expect to pay around \$50 for the trip into central Paris. Fares increase after 7 p.m. and on Sundays and holidays. Orly is located about 9 miles south of the city center, a 20- to 40-minute ride, depending on traffic.

Door-to-door shuttle: Airport Connection (mentioned above for service from Charles de Gaulle) also provides service from Orly for around \$20–\$30 depending on the number of passengers.

Air France Coach, Orlybus and Jetbus: The Air France bus runs between Orly, Gare Montparnasse and Invalides Metro station every 15 minutes from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. The cost one-way is approximately \$12 per person; average trip time is 30 minutes. For schedules, specific pick-up/drop-off locations and prices in English, please call the Air France Coach at 33-(0)8-92-35-08-20 or visit www.cars-airfrance.com.

The Paris Transit Authority's (RATP) Orlybus provides service every 15–20 minutes to Denfert-Rochereau Metro station for around \$8 per person; average trip time is 30 minutes. Another option is the Orlyval monorail (for about \$10), which leaves each

ORGANIZE A
BACKROADS PRIVATE
TRIP FOR YOUR
FAMILY, FRIENDS OR
COLLEAGUES FOR THE
TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Hotel Room Rate Guide
(U.S. dollars per night)

Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

terminal's arrivals area every 7 minutes for the Antony station, where the RER B line heads into Paris. Visit www.ratp.info/informer/anglais for more information.

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents charge a fee for their consulting services.)

Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but **hotel rates are always subject to change**.

Remember that even in first-class hotels, rooms are smaller than those in typical U.S. hotels. Rooms on the street tend to be noisy, so you might want to request a room overlooking the hotel's garden or courtyard. **Make your reservations early during the busy season, as rooms book well in advance.**

PARIS: LEFT BANK

HOTEL PONT ROYAL

Just steps from the Musée d'Orsay and the Gallimard publishing house, this sophisticated hotel offers an exclusive and intimate atmosphere. You'll appreciate the thoughtful attention to detail here, which can be seen in the fine décor—a blend of traditional and contemporary design featuring mahogany wood furniture, silks and stone. The rooms and suites present rich soothing color schemes of coral, earth and plum complemented by original artwork. The cozy bar with its library lounge is a great place to relax after a day of sightseeing. 7 rue de Montalembert, 7th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-42-84-70-00; www.hotel-pont-royal.com; 65 rooms, 10 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL RELAIS CHRISTINE

This exquisitely renovated convent, with its preserved 16th-century cloister, offers a homier experience than some of the other boutique hotels. The colorful interior, with its exposed wooden beams, French fabrics and fine antiques, resembles an elegant French cottage. Being tucked between St-Germain-des-Prés and the Latin Quarter means there's no shortage of great cafés, restaurants and shops nearby. 3 rue Christine, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-40-51-60-80; www.relais-christine.com; 51 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

ARTUS HOTEL

It's impossible to miss the unique touches at this hip hotel, such as hand-painted doors by local artists, and zebra-striped chairs in the lobby. Located in the rue de Buci outdoor market area, Artus Hôtel is a peaceful retreat in the heart of St-Germain. 34 rue de Buci, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-43-29-07-20; www.artushotel.com; 27 rooms and suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL D' AUBUSSON

You can't beat this hotel's location between the Seine and Boulevard St-Germain. This small gem provides all the amenities of a larger hotel along with unusually (by Parisian standards) spacious guest rooms. The refined décor features parquet floors, original Aubusson tapestries and French antique furniture. 33 rue Dauphine, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-43-29-43-43; www.hoteldaubusson.com; 49 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

HOTEL VICTORIA PALACE

Set between St-Germain and Montparnasse, the Victoria Palace has been a Left Bank landmark since 1913 and has hosted such luminaries as James Joyce and painter Giorgio de Chirico. The guest rooms strike the perfect balance between Parisian luxury and exceptional comfort with plush Louis XVI décor, vibrant fabrics by Suzanne Houllès and Lillière, marble baths, fluffy terrycloth robes and well-stocked mini bars. Evenings, relax in a cozy corner of the bar in the opulent Victorian salon. 6 rue Blaise Desgoffe, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-45-49-70-00; www.victoriapalace.com; 62 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

HOTEL BOURGOGNE & MONTANA

Well-situated on a quiet street across from the Palais Bourbon, just two blocks from the Seine, this welcoming boutique hotel is a great find at a reasonable price. The suites and superior rooms are individually decorated with antique furniture and thick quilted upholstery. The rooms are newly renovated with spacious luxurious bathrooms. Some offer views of the Grand Palais or the Assemblée Nationale. 3 rue de Bourgogne, 7th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-45-51-20-22; www.bourgogne-montana.com; 32 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL DE BUCI

You'll feel as if you're a guest in a Parisian home during your stay at the charming Hôtel de Buci, where elegantly decorated guest rooms feature cherry wood furniture and luxurious fabrics. Nestled in the heart of St-Germain—just off the boulevard St-Germain—this family-owned hotel has proximity to shops, bars, cafés, transportation and many of the city's most famous sites. 22 rue de Buci, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-55-42-74-74; www.bucihotel.com; 24 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL DE NOTRE DAME

You'll find this friendly little inn tucked away on an atmospheric side street on the Left Bank. The hotel is central to some of city's best attractions, yet at the same time manages to feel well off the beaten path. Room size varies, but tends to be on the small side. What the rooms lack in square footage, however, they make up for in charm. 19 rue Maitre Albert, 5th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-43-26-79-00; www.hotel-paris-notredame.com; 34 rooms. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL LUTETIA

Over the years, Hôtel Lutetia has attracted a long list of famous personalities from Picasso and Matisse, to Josephine Baker and even General Charles de Gaulle. The first Art Deco hotel in Paris, the Lutetia still claims an impressive guest list thanks to its top-notch service and designer Sybille de Margerie's exceedingly elegant blend of 1930s-style and contemporary décor. Indulge in a massage at the state-of-the-art fitness center before savoring the gourmet cuisine at the hotel's acclaimed Paris Restaurant. During your stay, be sure to view the hotel lobby's art collection which includes works by renowned present-day artists Philippe Hiquily,

Arman, Perrin, César and Thierry Bisch. 45 boulevard Raspail, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-49-54-46-46 or, to reach central reservations from the U.S. and Canada, dial 800-888-4747; www.lutetia-paris.com; 230 rooms, including 60 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆

HOTEL RELAIS SAINT-SULPICE

This charming hotel in the heart of the St-Germain shopping district is located behind the St-Sulpice Church and just around the corner from the Luxembourg Gardens. The tastefully decorated hotel surrounds an interior courtyard—a relaxing place to come back to after a fun-filled day in Paris. Ask for a superior room with a queen bed if you're interested in booking the most spacious room available. 3 rue de la Garancière, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-46-33-99-00; www.relais-saint-sulpice.com; 26 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

HOTEL VERNEUIL

This Left Bank jewel is a guest favorite and considered by many to be the city's best kept secret. It's ideally located near St-Germain-des-Prés, fine antique shops and the Musée d'Orsay. And the cozy interior, decorated with classic furniture, Provençal quilts and fine French fabrics, will make you feel right at home. 8 rue de Verneuil, 7th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-42-60-82-14; www.hotelverneuil.com; 26 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

PARIS: RIGHT BANK

HOTEL LANCASTER

Designed by well-respected hotelier Grace Leo-Andrieu, whose credits also include Hotel Montalembert in Paris and Le Toiny on St. Barts, this glamorous luxury property has drawn celebrities such as Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Clark Gable and Sir Alec Guinness. Even with an elegant interior showcasing a collection of antique clocks, paintings, lamps, tapestries, crystal and porcelain, the Lancaster is refreshingly unpretentious, and serene. The suites around an interior courtyard garden are the most requested rooms. 7 rue de Berri, 8th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-40-76-40-76; www.hotel-lancaster.fr; 46 rooms, 11 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL MEURICE

If you'd like to experience a true grande-dame hotel in Paris, the Meurice is a perfect choice. After a two-year multimillion-dollar renovation, this member of Leading Hotels of the World showcases a restored art nouveau glass-dome roof and other original embellishments. The hotel also features the Michelin-starred restaurant Le Meurice and a full-service health club with Caudalie spa treatments (renowned for their anti-aging effects). Situated across from the Tuileries Gardens, the hotel also has one of the finest locations in Paris. Two famous rooms are the Belle Étoile Suite, which offers a 360-degree view of Paris, and No. 628, which resembles a Napoleonic tent with its fabric walls and ceiling. 228 rue de Rivoli, 1st arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-44-58-10-10; www.meuricehotel.com; 121 rooms, 39 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

TROCADERO DOKHAN'S

This delightful find, situated near the Champs-Élysées and the Avenue Victor Hugo, is the perfect hotel for anyone who loves (or lives) to shop. It's full of flair, from the neoclassical awning-striped fabrics contrasted with gilded moldings and antiques to the city's only champagne bar, which is always hopping come nightfall. The hotel has been noted for its whimsical décor and pied-à-terre feel as experienced in the Eiffel Tower Suite, featuring an outstanding view of its namesake. 117 rue Lauriston, 16th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-

53-65-66-99; www.dokhans-sofitel-paris.com; 41 rooms, 4 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆

HOTEL LE LAVOISIER

This stylish boutique hotel is located near the Place St-Augustin, within walking distance of the Opéra and the fine boutiques on the rue du Faubourg St-Honoré. While there is an energetic spirit here, the hotel has an understated charm and displays décor that has been described as “traditionalism-with-a-twist.” 21 rue Lavoisier, 8th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-53-30-06-06; www.paris-hotel-lavoisier.com; 30 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

TOURS

HOTEL DE L'UNIVERS

L'Univers is known for having hosted the Duke of Windsor, Rudyard Kipling, Winston Churchill and other notable figures. The hotel's traditional and welcoming ambience is heightened by its warm color palette, elegant wood-paneled guest rooms and amiable staff. Most rooms face the flower garden—request a garden view when you book. 5 Boulevard Heurteloup; Phone: 33-(0)2-47-05-37-12; www.hotel-univers.fr; 85 rooms and suites. Rates: ◆◆◆

JEAN BARDET-CHATEAU BELMONT

This enchanting Relais & Châteaux member-hotel was once a Touraine residence. You'll feel right at home in this peaceful haven complemented by cheery guest rooms and the warm greetings of owners Sophie and Jean Bardet. Jean's exquisite cuisine, prepared with fresh regional ingredients, is always a treat. 57 rue Groison; Phone: 33-(0)2-47-41-41-11; www.jeanbardet.com; 16 rooms, 5 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆

DOMAINE DE BEAUVOIS

This magnificent château sits on 350 acres of parkland about 13 miles outside of Tours and offers a healthy dose of decadent Loire Valley pleasures. Enjoy amazing feasts on the veranda, wine tastings in the cellar and a hot air balloon ride over the neighboring estates—you're sure to live like royalty during your stay. Le Pont Clouet; Phone: 33-(0)2-47-55-50-11; www.domaine-beauvois.com; 35 rooms, 1 suite. Rates: ◆◆

We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.