

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Loire Valley

AMONG THE CHATEAUX IN THE ROYAL GARDEN OF FRANCE

TO RESERVE YOUR
TRIP CALL
800-462-2848 OR
SIGN UP ONLINE [HERE](#)



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.

**IN BUSINESS FOR
29 YEARS,
BACKROADS IS
RECOGNIZED YEAR IN
AND YEAR OUT AS
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
TOP 10 TRAVEL
COMPANIES BY
TRAVEL+LEISURE**

Just southwest of Paris is a refined domaine, where magnificent châteaux rest on the banks of slow-moving rivers, and vineyards stretch alongside gently rolling sunflower fields and forested lanes. Explore this elegant region of France from the seat of a bicycle, and you will be richly rewarded. Pedal through lush farmland and woodland, and visit fairy-tale castles whose walls harbor secrets of political intrigue and sinful soirées. Welcoming accommodations, tasty regional cuisine and acclaimed wines all add a flourish to this experience nonpareil.

DAY 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads T-shirts) at **12:15 p.m.** at the Tours train station. **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes.** See “Arriving & Departing” for additional logistics information.

SHUTTLE TO FONTEVRAUD 1 HOUR

JEANNE D'ARC ROUTE 22 MILES

After meeting in Tours, we shuttle to the historic village of Fontevraud, eating a light lunch along the way. Upon arrival, your Trip Leaders fit your bike and give a brief demonstration of riding techniques and safety. Before heading out for the afternoon, you can take a self-guided tour of Fontevraud's medieval Benedictine abbey. Built in the late 11th century, the abbey was run by women, which was unusual for the time. Fontevraud's first abbess was appointed in 1115, and for centuries abbesses had considerable influence, answering only to the Pope on religious matters. Fontevraud has undergone several transformations, serving first as an austere religious retreat and then as a royal religious center. Later, the abbey was used as a prison—a role you may find difficult to imagine as you stand in its peaceful cloister (still the largest in France).

The afternoon is yours to discover why biking in the Loire countryside is so enjoyable. Cruising along pleasant rolling terrain, you'll be surrounded by wheat and sunflower fields, thick forests and sleepy towns. Your destination is Chinon and the Hôtel Diderot, a converted nobleman's house owned and operated by three siblings who will make you feel just like family. This evening we gather for a wine reception, followed by dinner at a nearby restaurant. *Lodging: Hôtel Diderot*

DAY 2

BOURGUEIL ROUTE 36 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

SHORTER OPTION: DEJEUNER A LANGEAIS 16 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: DIDEROT LOOP 48 MILES

Pedal along rolling hills through the Chinon Forest to Château Ussé, the 15th-century fairy-tale castle overlooking the Loire and Indre Rivers. Because of its combination of beauty and fortress-like appearance, the château is believed to have inspired Charles Perrault's famous *Château de la Belle au bois Dormant* (“Sleeping Beauty”). 2008 BLVQ RIT (10/12/07)



HOTEL DIDEROT

(2 nights) Built in the 15th century and modified in the 18th century, this classic manor house is just steps from the town's center and medieval quarter.

Chinon

phone: 33-(0)2-47-93-18-87
www.hoteldiderot.com

CHATEAU DE LA BOURDAISIÈRE

(1 night) Nestled on 140 acres in the heart of the Loire Valley, this 16th-century castle welcomes you with a beautiful outdoor swimming pool, tennis courts.

Montlouis sur Loire

phone: 33-(0)2-47-45-16-31
www.chateaulabourdaisiere.com

CHATEAU DE CHISSAY

(2 nights) This former royal residence is surrounded by a park and forest, and features an outdoor swimming pool and elegant rooms.

Chissay-en-Touraine

phone: 33-(0)2-54-32-32-01
www.chateaudechissay.com

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

Continue on to the historic town of Langeais, home to the Château de Langeais, an unpretentious castle built by Louis XI in the mid-1400s. After a catered lunch in Langeais, return to Chinon and explore Château de Chinon, the spot where Joan of Arc first met Charles VII in 1429 and persuaded him to allow her to lead an army to Orléans. This evening, Laurent, one of the hotel's owners, treats us to a tasting of Chinon wines. Afterward, you are on your own to choose from plenty of fine restaurants in Chinon for dinner. *Lodging: Hôtel Diderot*

DAY 3

CORMERY ROUTE 42 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

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

LONGER OPTION: CHATEAU DE BOURDAISIÈRE 52 MILES

The day begins with a short, invigorating climb out of Chinon. An easygoing stretch past fields, grand estates and gardens brings you to Azay-le-Rideau, a lively town on the banks of the Indre River. You can take a self-guided tour of the town's château, considered one of the most magnificent in France. Appearing to float on the tranquil surface of the river (a tributary of the Loire), Château d'Azay-le-Rideau strikes an imposing figure with its decorative turrets and ornamented machicolations. The interior is equally splendid, with a grand staircase, beautifully restored period furniture, tapestries and family portraits.

After enjoying lunch in a local bistro or creperie, continue to bike (or shuttle) to Cormery, built around the ruins of an 8th-century Benedictine abbey. The gorgeous and fairly hilly route to Cormery provides a varied backdrop of forest, countryside and small villages. If you're feeling especially energetic, continue by bike to the town of Montlouis sur Loire and our next hotel, Château de la Bourdaisière. We cap off the day with a meal of local specialties in the dining room. *Lodging: Château de la Bourdaisière*

DAY 4

CHATEAU DE CHISSAY ROUTE 26 MILES

SHORTER OPTION: AMBOISE 12 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: PONTLEVOY 50 MILES

Hop on your bike this morning and pedal through Amboise before grabbing lunch on your own in town. From Amboise, ride country bike paths—passing bucolic scenery and lush forest—en route to Chissay-en-Touraine. You can spend the rest of the afternoon wandering around town. Be sure to visit Clos Lucé, the house where Leonardo da Vinci spent the final four years of his life. The museum at Clos Lucé contains designs and models of the machines conceived by da Vinci, including an airplane, helicopter, parachute and turning bridge. Nearby, check out the 15th-century Château d'Amboise, which held the court of François I during the French Renaissance and now serves as da Vinci's final resting place. This evening we dine and stay at Château de Chissay, a 13th-century fortified castle and former royal residence. *Lodging: Château de Chissay*

DAY 5

CORMERY 29 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

SHORTER OPTION: NITRAY 17 MILES WITH SHUTTLE

LONGER OPTION: CHISSAY LOOP 44 MILES

After breakfast, set out for a ride through vineyards and along the Cher River to the most famous of Loire Valley châteaux: Château de Chenonceau. Tour this graceful Renaissance castle, which spans the Cher River and features vast gardens, galleries, magnificent



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 don't have to sweat the details! Backroads takes care of everything--from making sure your luggage is waiting for you in your room to appearing with a cool drink or a lift when you need it the most--allowing you to enjoy a carefree vacation full of fun and relaxation.

Traveling with Backroads is about making connections: with places and people, history and culture, fellow travelers--perhaps you'll even discover something new about yourself!

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

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

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 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, which became known as the "Château of Six Women."

We continue to Château de Nitray set on 43 hectares of vineyards and gardens. We're greeted by the jovial Jean Claude, who illuminates the inhabited Renaissance-style château through wonderful historical anecdotes. If you'd like, you can sample the local varietals before lunch. Then we'll sit down to a homemade lunch of salad, charcuterie and cheeses on the grounds.

From Château de Nitray you can opt to hop in the shuttle or pedal back to the hotel. Ride through the quiet countryside, hitting some challenging hills, passing local wineries and sleepy towns. Tonight we toast our *voyage français* in style at the Château de Chissay. *Lodging: Château de Chissay*

DAY 6

CHISSAY LOOP 22 MILES

SHUTTLE TO TOURS 45 MINUTES

Feel free to take one last spin through the countryside or relax by the pool and savor a leisurely breakfast. After gathering for lunch, we take a private coach back to the main train station in Tours, where our trip comes to a close. 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, we meet at the main train station in Tours at 12:15 p.m. **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes, or have your gear packed in a small bag so you can change at the train station.** Look for a Backroads Trip Leader, who will be 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.

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day of the trip, a private coach takes you back to the main train station in Tours (a 45-minute drive), arriving around 2 p.m., in time for you to catch an afternoon train to Paris. We recommend that you purchase a round-trip ticket from Paris in advance to avoid possible lines at the Tours train station.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

We recommend flying into Paris and then taking a train to Tours. For help arranging air



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

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

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 (airport code: CDG) and Orly Airports (airport code: ORY). 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 which leaves about every 10 minutes. Travel time to Tours is about 1 hour, 10 minutes and ticket prices start around \$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. Note that you will be required to change trains in St-Pierre des Corps. There are several daily departures, the trip takes about 2 hours and prices start 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.–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.–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.



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.

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	◆◆◆◆◆

TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN ORLY 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.–11 p.m. The cost one-way, per person is approximately \$12; 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, which leaves each terminal's arrivals area every 7 minutes for the Antony station (for about \$10) 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.

PARIS

HOTEL DES GRANDES ECOLES

Ernest Hemingway lived right next door to this peaceful retreat in the heart of the historic Latin Quarter. The hotel's most charming feature may be its flower-filled courtyard garden, which makes for a perfect spot to enjoy a leisurely breakfast en plein aire. Guest rooms range from medium size to spacious. Early booking is essential. 75 rue Cardinal Lemoine, 5th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-43-26-79-23; www.hotel-grandes-ecoles.com; 51 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

HOTEL DES JARDINS DU LUXEMBOURG

This is the place to stay if you want to live like Parisian bourgeois without breaking your budget. The hotel is just around the corner from the Luxembourg Gardens on a quiet tree-lined cul-de-sac. Entering past the honey-colored façade, you'll find a welcoming and colorful Art Deco interior. Guest rooms range in size from small to medium; all are elegantly decorated and some have balconies. The hotel has a loyal clientele (Sigmund

Freud stayed here), so reserve early if possible. 5 impasse Royer-Collard, 5th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-40-46-08-88; www.les-jardins-du-luxembourg.com; 26 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

HOTEL DE BUCI

You'll feel like a guest in a Parisian home during your stay at the charming Hôtel de Buci with its elegant individually decorated guest rooms featuring cherry wood furniture and luxurious fabrics. Nestled in the heart of St-Germain—just off the boulevard St-Germain—this family-owned haven offers ideal access 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 RELAIS SAINT-SULPICE

This charming hotel is located behind the St-Sulpice Church in the heart of the St-Germain shopping district and around the corner from the Luxembourg Gardens. It's tastefully decorated and features a patio where you can relax after a fun-filled day in Paris. The superior rooms with queen beds are the most spacious. 3 rue de la Garancière, 6th arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-46-33-99-00; www.relais-saint-sulpice.com; 26 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. The suites and superior rooms are individually decorated with antique furniture and thick quilted upholstery. Some rooms 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 BRITANNIQUE

Just a stone's throw from the Louvre, Les Halles, the Pompidou and Notre Dame, the Britannique is a solid three-star value in the heart of historic Paris. The hotel lobby is stylishly decorated with richly colored fabrics, dark wood paneling, upholstered armchairs and 19th-century Anglo bric-a-brac. Expect rooms to be small and modestly furnished. Air-conditioning, soundproofed windows and English-language cable TV and newspapers are nice touches. 20 avenue Victoria, 1st arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-42-33-74-59; www.hotel-britannique.fr; 40 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 sizes vary, but tend to be on the small side. What the rooms lack in size, 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 THERESE

Enjoy the warm relaxed atmosphere at Hôtel Thérèse, located within walking distance of the Louvre, the Palais Royal, rue St Honoré and the Opéra. Rue de Thérèse is an eclectic quiet street, where traditional fabric manufacturers mingle with trendy shops and galleries, and many wonderful restaurants are nearby. Rooms are small, but the hotel has great character, and the location and service can't be beat. 5/7, rue Thérèse, 1st arrondissement; Phone: 33-(0)1-42-96-10-01; www.hoteltherese.com; 40 rooms. 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 boasts 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: ♦♦♦♦

ARTUS HOTEL

Overflowing with style and whimsy, this hip hotel features unique touches like doors that have been hand-painted by local artists, and zebra-striped chairs in the lobby. Located in the rue de Buci outdoor market area, Artus Hôtel is great fun as well as a peaceful haven 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. Rates: ♦♦♦♦

TOURS

JEAN BARDET-CHATEAU BELMONT

Nestled in the heart of the Loire, this enchanting Relais & Châteaux member and former Touraine residence has been converted into a peaceful haven. Owners Sophie and Jean Bardet make you feel at home with their warm greetings and cheery guest rooms. You'll love Jean's exquisite cuisine, prepared with fresh regional ingredients. 57 rue Groison; Phone: 33-(0)2-47-41-41-11; www.jeanbardet.com; 16 rooms and 5 suites. Rates: ♦♦♦

HOTEL DE L'UNIVERS

L'Univers is known for having once 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.touraine-hotels.org/univers.htm; 77 rooms and 8 suites. Rates: ♦♦♦

DOMAINE DE BEAUVOIS

A member of Small Leading Hotels of the World, this magnificent château sits on 350 acres 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; 34 rooms and 2 suites. 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.