

For tours departing beyond 2010, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2011 brochure (issued in Oct 10).

2010
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!

FRANCE Dossier Ref. LV

Loire Valley Cycling

Amended 16 Sep 2009. Valid from 01 Jan 2010 to 31 Dec 2010

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, www.explore.co.uk. Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

8 days/7 nights Land Only
Montrichard to Chinon

Join Montrichard (day 1)

End Chinon (day 8)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their way to the joining point at the hotel in Montrichard. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for further details.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

8 days/7 nights Tour including
Connecting Group rail travel by
Eurostar via Lille

London-Montrichard & Chinon-London

Depart from London St Pancras by Eurostar to Lille then train from Lille via Tours to Montrichard; short walk to hotel in Montrichard (day 1 of Land Only itinerary). Additional joining information details will be forwarded with final 'Joining Instructions'.

Return from Chinon (day 8 of itinerary) by taxi to Tours, then by train to Lille and by Eurostar to arrive London St Pancras the same day.

Passengers with non-group rail travel booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for train details. Transfers to and from the train station are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights of the tour we particularly mention:

- * **CHATEAU OF CHENONCEAU** The Chateau des Dames.
- * **MONTRICHARD** Medieval town.
- * **LOIRE VALLEY** Cycling in the 'Garden of France'.

Earth Matters

- As tap water is safe to drink in France, consider using this rather than bottled water to reduce waste from plastic bottles.
- Brushing up on 'school French' is a great way to build friendly relationships with local people.
- As we use the train on this tour we significantly reduce the amount of pollution caused by carbon dioxide emissions.
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

* **AZAY-LE-RIDEAU** With its château and nearby troglodyte villages.

Carrying on your bikes only what is needed for each day, you ride through the lovely Loire Valley from Montrichard, through medieval Amboise, to Chinon and its famous vineyards. This route is rated easy (see below for details) and the average ride between nightstops is about 39km, so there's ample time to visit the many delightful villages, châteaux and vineyards along the way. Riding independently or with several fellow travellers, there is the opportunity for longer, more testing routes if you wish to take in more of the surrounding countryside. The 21-speed bicycles are ideally suited to the undulating terrain and few hills on the way. Your support driver provides detailed route briefings and transports luggage in a vehicle, leaving you free to cycle unencumbered at your own pace. You don't normally cycle as a group; equipped with maps and guidebooks, and whatever clothing you need, anyone can stop en route wherever they please. You stay mostly in small, simple, family-run hotels, in rooms with en-suite facilities. Since we spend 2 nights at most places, there are several rest days when we are not moving on, when you can choose to cycle as little or as much as you please. Plus, of course, there's every opportunity to enjoy the marvellous wines, fine cheeses and cuisine of the region!

Cycling Grades

Grading is a somewhat difficult topic as much depends on the individuals own perception of his or her abilities. The following is intended as a general guide to our cycling grades. This is rated **easy**.

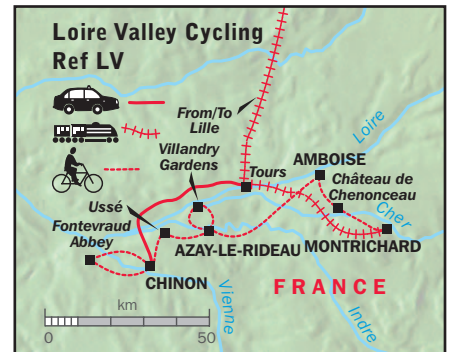
Easy: Generally cycling on the flat and/or occasionally on hilly terrain with very limited uphill sections. These trips should appeal to anybody with reasonable fitness, who perhaps enjoys a cycle ride at home every now and then. Ideal for those new to the concept of cycling holidays.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the daily route published below, our planned cycle routes may occasionally vary depending on road/track/track or cycle path conditions.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Luggage is transferred between hotels by vehicle which is driven by the tour leader therefore cycling will be self-guided. The tour leader will provide detailed route maps and notes each day. You can ride independently or with fellow passengers carrying only what you need for the day. There is no vehicle back up. Should you wish to opt out of some of the cycling your tour leader will be able to assist organising alternative transport.



Day 1. Join tour Montrichard

The hotel is situated close to the centre of this small town, which still retains several medieval houses clustered around its 11th century keep. **2 nights hotel H+.**

Day 2. In Montrichard

Having had a chance to familiarise ourselves with our bikes, we start by exploring the area around Montrichard. There is the opportunity to cycle east of the village to taste the local wines of the Cher region in small co-operatives, or visit the 17th century château of Gue Pean and Pontlevoy Abbey, a gentle introductory ride. Alternatively, you can just follow the local backroads through small, quiet villages. In the afternoon you may like to tour the large Montmousseau winery or visit the mushroom museum or a troglodyte dwelling. (Optional rides approx. 35km cycling). **(Included meals: B).**

Day 3. Cycle to Amboise

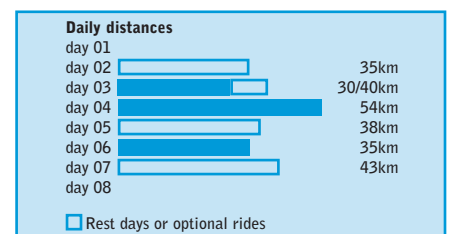
Following the River Cher, we pass through the village of Chissay. The magnificent château of Chenonceau is close by, beautifully situated above the waters of the Cher. Leaving the river, we cycle through the tranquil forest to our overnight stop at Amboise. On arrival you may choose to visit Clos Lucé, the house where Leonardo da Vinci spent his last 3 years and now a museum dedicated to his life and work. (Approx. 30km cycling). **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 4. Cycle to Azay-le-Rideau

A longer days' cycling on cross country routes via St Martin-le-Beau and Nitray to Cormery, a town famous for its macarons, and then along the River Indre, with optional visits to Pont-de-Ruan and Sèche, home of Balzac and now the site of an excellent museum of literature. (Approx. 54km cycling). **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 5. In Azay-le-Rideau

We spend the day in Azay, where we can visit the château and walk in its gardens along the banks of the River Indre. For those wanting to explore further, south-east of Azay is the troglodyte village of Villaines-les-Rochers, now famous for its willow basket-weaving. Or north of Azay is Villandry, with its



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beautifully recreated Renaissance garden, one of the finest in the whole of France. (Optional rides approx. 38km cycling). (Included meals: B).

Day 6. Cycle to Chinon

South-west of Azay, en-route to Chinon and situated between the banks of the Loire and the Forest of Chinon, is the Château d'Ussé – a truly romantic château and reputedly the setting for the fairy tale 'Sleeping Beauty'. On the north bank of the river are the vineyards of Bourgeuil, famous for their velvety red wines. A variety of routes to Chinon are possible, depending on your preferences. (Approx. 35km cycling). **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 7. In Chinon

Today we suggest you walk through the cobbled streets of the old town of Chinon and up to the château, where Joan of Arc identified the Dauphin, or cycle the circular 'Wine Route' of Chinon southeast along the River Vienne experiencing the famous Chinon vineyards as you go. Alternatively, you can take a westerly direction and visit Fontevraud Abbey, which houses the tombs of the Plantagenet Kings including Henry II and Richard the Lionheart. (Optional rides approx. 43km cycling). (Included meals: B).

Day 8. Tour ends Chinon (Included meals: B).

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, entrance fees to châteaux, museums and other sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: As the opportunity to change money is limited, we recommend you take your funds in Euros cash only.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns – your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability: Most major towns – your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Credit Card Acceptance: In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Most major towns – your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: 7 breakfasts are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time

due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	France
Coffee	£1.20	€2.50
Soft Drink	0.80	2.50
Bottle of water	0.80	2.50
Bottle of beer	2.50	3.00
Bottle of wine	10.00	15.00
2 Course Meal*	10.00	10.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	15.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Other Sightseeing

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

MONTRICHARD Entrance to Keep €5.00 mornings.

MONTRICHARD Entrance to Château of Gue Pean €5.00.

CHENONCEAUX Château of Chenonceau €9.00.

AMBOISE Entrance to château €8.00 and to Clos Luce €12.00.

VILLANDRY Entrance to château and gardens €7.50, to gardens only €5.00.

USSE Entrance to château €11.00.

Fontevraud Entrance to abbey €8.90.

CHINON CHATEAU Entrance €7.50.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

This area has a generally mild climate. Summer days are generally warm and sunny, although rain can occur at all times of the year. Summers are a little warmer than those in southern Britain. Wine harvesting takes place in late August/early September.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

Visas not required by UK, CAN, USA & AUS, NZ citizens or EU nationals. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus recommended.

Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination including safety and security, local laws and customs, entry requirements and health. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

H++ : Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

H+ : Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

H : Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

Camping

C++ : Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed-linen is provided.

C+ : Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

C : Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

Note: other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

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PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information booklet**', available after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of baggage (a zip-up nylon grip rather than a suitcase) and a daysac for use in towns on non-cycling days. Total allowance: **44lbs/ 20kgs**. We are unable to carry luggage in excess of the above allowance. Any excess luggage should either be left in storage or forwarded by you to the hotel in Chinon. A support vehicle moves your main baggage between hotels. The bicycles are supplied with a pannier to carry what is needed during the day ie. spare clothing and waterproofs.

Clothing: Pack for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**' as listed in our 'General Information booklet'. However, you must bring a warm sweater or jacket for cycling on cool days and for wearing during the evenings. In case of rain, waterproofs are essential. Also, a pair of long trousers or tracksuit bottoms are useful for cycling along hedgerow-lined footpaths. There are some opportunities to swim in the rivers or local swimming pools. Please note that French health regulations require men to wear 'proper' Lycra trunks rather than shorts in the pool.

Footwear: Trainers for cycling plus comfortable shoes for around town.

Equipment: A puncture repair kit and lock are provided – we recommend you bring your own helmet for the reasons outlined above (see "Safety" paragraph). We strongly advise that helmets are always worn whilst cycling. Bring a water-bottle that clips on to the bike. Elasticated bungy cords are useful for attaching things to your bike, whilst wrap-around sunglasses help prevent insects or pollen getting in your eyes. A penknife is useful for picnic lunches. A map and our day-to-day notes are provided at the start of the tour, but you should bring your own choice of guidebook to have with you during the day. Padded shorts, trousers or a personal 'gel seat' are recommended but not essential. Cycling gloves are strongly recommended as they will protect you from sunburn and may also help protect your hands if you fall. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies.

Safety

All bicycles provided on our holidays are serviced frequently: spokes, tyres, gear and brake mechanisms are checked over and tested thoroughly by experienced bicycle mechanics before each tour commences. Cycling, of course, is an active pursuit and to maximise your own personal protection in case of a tumble or fall, we **strongly recommend** that you wear a bicycle helmet whilst cycling. It is our firm belief that there is no helmet like your own helmet and for this reason we do not provide helmets locally. Like a good fitting pair of walking boots, helmets are a very personal item of equipment – by bringing your own you guarantee a snug fit and that it hasn't been damaged. It is also more hygienic to wear your own rather than one which has been used by someone else previously.

A full safety briefing and riding advice will be provided by your Tour Leader at the start of your tour. This briefing will also include details of what to do should you encounter any minor technical problems with your bicycle, or a puncture. Puncture repair kits will be provided locally, when and where necessary during the trip.

Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore for further information.

Bike Details	Equipment provided
Bike type:	Hybrid
Bike model:	Trek
Number of gears:	21
Brakes:	V-Brake
Suspension:	None
Frame range:	17"-23"
Panniers/bike bag type provided:	Rear panniers
Water bottle holder provided:	Yes
Water bottle provided:	No
Adjustable handlebars:	Yes
Female saddles provided:	Yes
Gel saddles provided:	No
Option to fit own saddle:	Yes
Option to fit own pedals:	Yes
Picture of the standard bike will be on the Explore website under each specific tour reference	

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