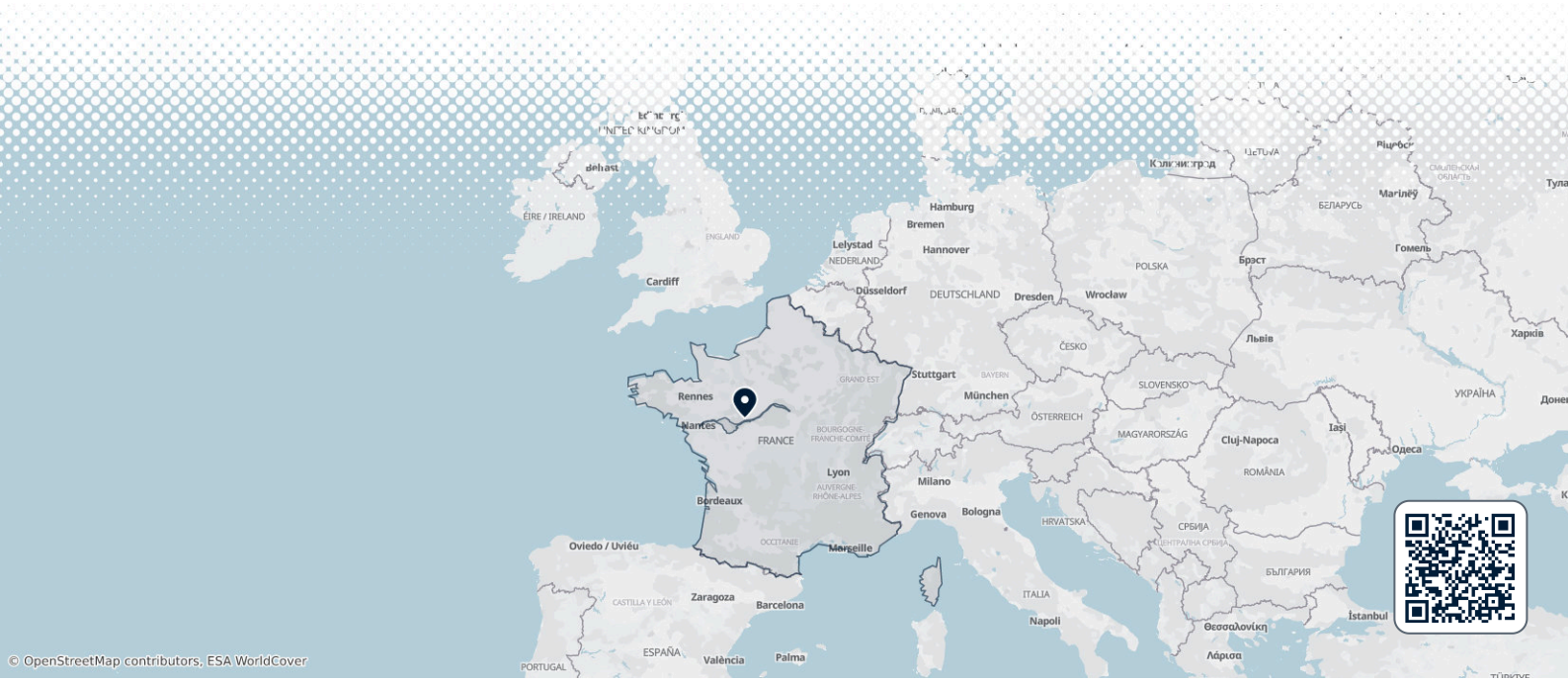


Loire Valley

France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

The Loire Valley is a long river region in central and western France. It is known for its Renaissance châteaux, formal gardens and wine villages. The valley between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes-sur-Loire is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. French kings and nobles built their country homes here, so the area has far more grand houses than most regions.

The pace is slow, and the towns are small. The region suits a trip of three to seven days by car, train or bike. It works well for travelers who like history, gardens, cycling and local wine. Tours, Blois and Angers are the main bases.

When to visit

May to September is the best time. Days are warm and long, and all the châteaux and gardens are open. April and October are quieter and still pleasant. Winter is cool and grey, and some smaller sights close or shorten their hours. Many châteaux add Christmas decorations in December.

The biggest annual event is the International Garden Festival at Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire. Designers build new show gardens each year, and the festival runs from spring to autumn.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for sightseeing	8° / 13° Feels like 3°	2° / -5°	13 rainy days · Dry air
February	Fair Fair for cycling	10° / 15° Feels like 5°	2° / -4°	Dry air
March	Good Good for cycling	13° / 19° Feels like 9°	3° / -3°	Dry air
April	Great Great for cycling	16° / 23° Feels like 13°	6° / 0°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 26°	9° / 4°	12 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 31°	13° / 8°	
July	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 33°	14° / 10°	
August	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 34°	14° / 10°	
September	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 30°	12° / 7°	Dry air
October	Good Good for cycling	18° / 24°	9° / 3°	13 rainy days · Dry air
November	Fair Fair for cycling	12° / 18° Feels like 8°	5° / -2°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for cycling	8° / 14° Feels like 4°	2° / -4°	13 rainy days · Dry air

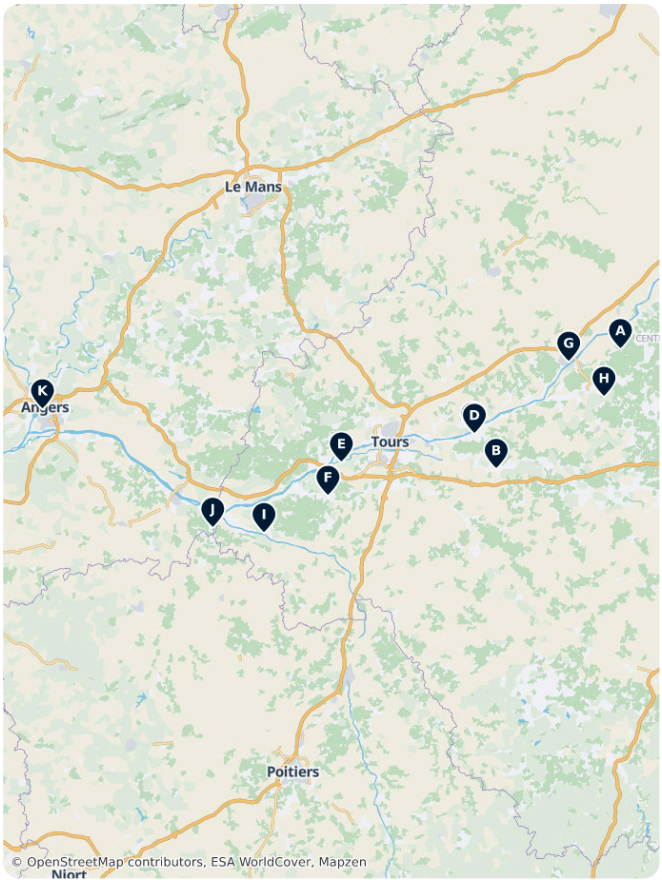
Best months: May, June, July, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

The big châteaux are 30 to 90 minutes apart, so plan two or three a day at most.

- A Château de Chambord is the largest château in the valley. *Francis I* began it in 1519 as a hunting lodge. Its roof has many towers and chimneys, and the central double staircase is the famous detail.
- B Château de Chenonceau stands on arches over the Cher river. Several powerful women shaped it, so it is often called the Ladies' Château. The long gallery over the water is the highlight.
- C Château d'Amboise looks over the Loire at Amboise. D Château du Clos Lucé is a short walk away. *Leonardo da Vinci* spent his last years there and died in 1519.
- E Château de Villandry is known for its gardens, with a patterned vegetable garden. It is best from late spring to early autumn.
- F Château d'Azay-le-Rideau is a small Renaissance château on an island in the Indre river. Built between 1518 and 1527, it is reflected in the water around it.
- G Royal Castle of Blois has wings from four different periods around one courtyard. It is in the middle of Blois, so it is easy to visit without a car.
- H Château de Cheverny is a 17th-century château that is still lived in by the same family. It inspired the home of Captain Haddock in the *Tintin* books.
- I Chinon Castle is a hilltop fortress above the old town of Chinon. *Joan of Arc* met the future king here in 1429.
- J Abbaye de Fontevraud is a large abbey. Its church holds tomb figures of the Plantagenet royals, including *Henry II* and *Eleanor of Aquitaine*.
- K Château d'Angers is a dark fortress with a large wall of towers. Inside is the Apocalypse Tapestry, a medieval work.



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Turn the places from this guide into a real itinerary, with smart routing, time estimates, and everything you need for a perfect trip.

3M+ downloads · 4.6 stars · 15 years of trip planning

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Scan to download the app

What to experience

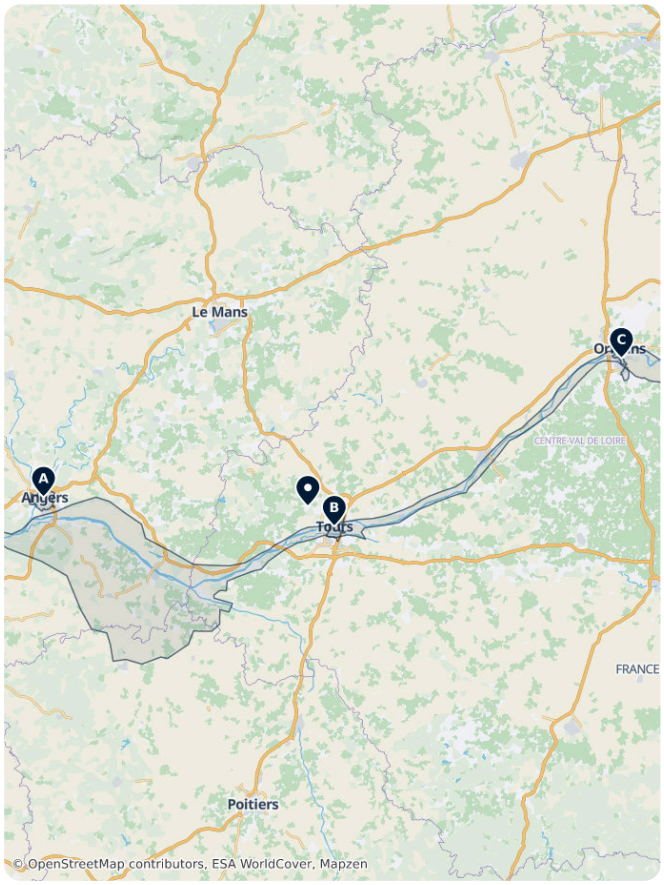
Things to do in the Loire Valley, beyond visiting châteaux.

- **Cycle the Loire à Vélo**: Ride a short stage between two châteaux, for example along the river from Tours. Stop at village cafés on the way.
- **Taste wine in a rock cellar**: Many wine villages near Vouvray, Chinon and Saumur have cellars cut into the soft limestone cliffs. Most offer tastings.
- **See a show garden**: The garden festival at Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire changes every year, so it is worth a visit even if you went before.
- **Watch a night show**: In summer, several châteaux hold evening light and sound shows. Royal Castle of Blois is one.
- **Fly in a hot-air balloon**: Balloon flights over the valley leave from villages near Amboise in good weather. Book ahead.
- **Canoe on the river**: In summer, you can paddle on the Loire or the smaller Cher and Indre rivers.

Day trips

Most visitors stay inside the valley. These places lie just outside it and make a good day out. Times are one way.

- Nantes: about 35 to 45 minutes by train from Ⓐ Angers. It is a large city with a castle and a big old centre.
- Beauval Zoo, near Saint-Aignan: about 1 hour by car from Ⓑ Tours. It is a large zoo known for its giant pandas.
- Le Mans: about 1 hour by train from Tours. It has a well-kept medieval old town.
- Chartres: about 1 hour by car from Ⓒ Orléans. Its Gothic cathedral has famous stained glass.
- Sancerre: about 1 hour 30 minutes by car from Orléans. This hilltop wine village makes crisp white wine.



Where to explore

The region has several good bases and day-trip towns.

- East, near Paris: Orléans, Blois and Chambord.
- Centre: Tours is the main hub for trains and châteaux.
- West: Saumur and Angers.

Getting there

- **By air**: Most visitors fly to the Paris airports (Charles de Gaulle or Orly) and continue by train. For the west, Nantes Atlantique (NTE) is the nearest large airport. Check the train connection from each airport.
- **By train**: From Paris, high-speed TGV trains from Montparnasse reach Saint-Pierre-des-Corps, the main station for Tours, in about 1 hour. Angers is about 1.5 hours from Paris by TGV. Regional trains also run from Paris Austerlitz to Orléans and Blois. Book on SNCF Connect.
- **Between towns**: Regional TER trains link Tours with Blois, Orléans, Saumur, Angers and Chinon.

Getting around

- **Train**: The main line follows the river from Orléans through Blois, Amboise and Tours to Saumur and Angers. Chenonceau, Chaumont-sur-Loire and Azay-le-Rideau have stations or are a short taxi ride from one. Buy tickets at the station or on SNCF Connect.
- **No train**: Château de Chambord and Château de Villandry have no station. You need a car, a bike, a taxi or an organised minibus tour from a nearby town.
- **Cycling**: The Loire à Vélo route is about 900 km long and mostly flat. It passes many châteaux, and e-bikes are easy to hire in the main towns. Many regional trains carry bikes. See Loire à Vélo.
- **Local buses and trams**: Tours and Angers have tram lines. Smaller towns have limited buses.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Yes, for a multi-day trip. Many châteaux and wine villages are far from stations. A car saves a lot of time.
- **Roads**: The A10 and A85 motorways run along the valley. Tolls apply on much of the A10. Smaller roads are quiet and scenic.
- **Parking**: Most châteaux have a large car park, often paid. In town centres, use the signed car parks and avoid the pedestrian old towns.

Food & drink

Loire food is simple and fresh. Try *rillettes*, a potted pork spread, and goat cheeses such as Sainte-Maure-de-Touraine, Selles-sur-Cher and Crottin de Chavignol. River fish, often served with a butter sauce, is a regional dish. In Anjou, *fouées* are small warm breads that are stuffed with fillings. *Tarte Tatin*, an upside-down caramel apple tart, comes from the Sologne area.

The valley makes many wines. Vouvray is mostly white, Chinon and Saumur-Champigny are light reds, and Sancerre is a crisp white. Many producers welcome visitors for tastings.

For eating, look at the old-town squares in Tours, Angers and Saumur. Tourist menus near the big châteaux are often average, so walk into the nearest town instead.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

The Loire Valley is very safe for visitors. Petty theft is rare but can happen in crowded places.

- **Cars**: Do not leave bags or valuables visible in parked cars at château car parks.
- **Floods**: The Loire can flood in winter and spring. Check river-side paths and campsites before you go.
- **Heat**: Summer afternoons can be hot, and many châteaux have little shade. Carry water.

History

In the 15th century the French kings moved their court to the Loire. The royal court lived in the valley for much of the next 150 years. In 1429 *Joan of Arc* met the future king at Chinon Castle. She then helped end the English siege of Orléans. Orléans still celebrates this each spring.

Earlier, the Plantagenet kings of England held land here. *Henry II* and *Eleanor of Aquitaine* are linked to Abbaye de Fontevraud.

The Renaissance came after French kings brought Italian artists home from war in Italy. *Francis I* built Château de Chambord and invited *Leonardo da Vinci* to live near Château d'Amboise. In 1588 *Henry III* had the Duke of Guise killed at Royal Castle of Blois. Later kings returned to Paris, and the châteaux became quiet country homes.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

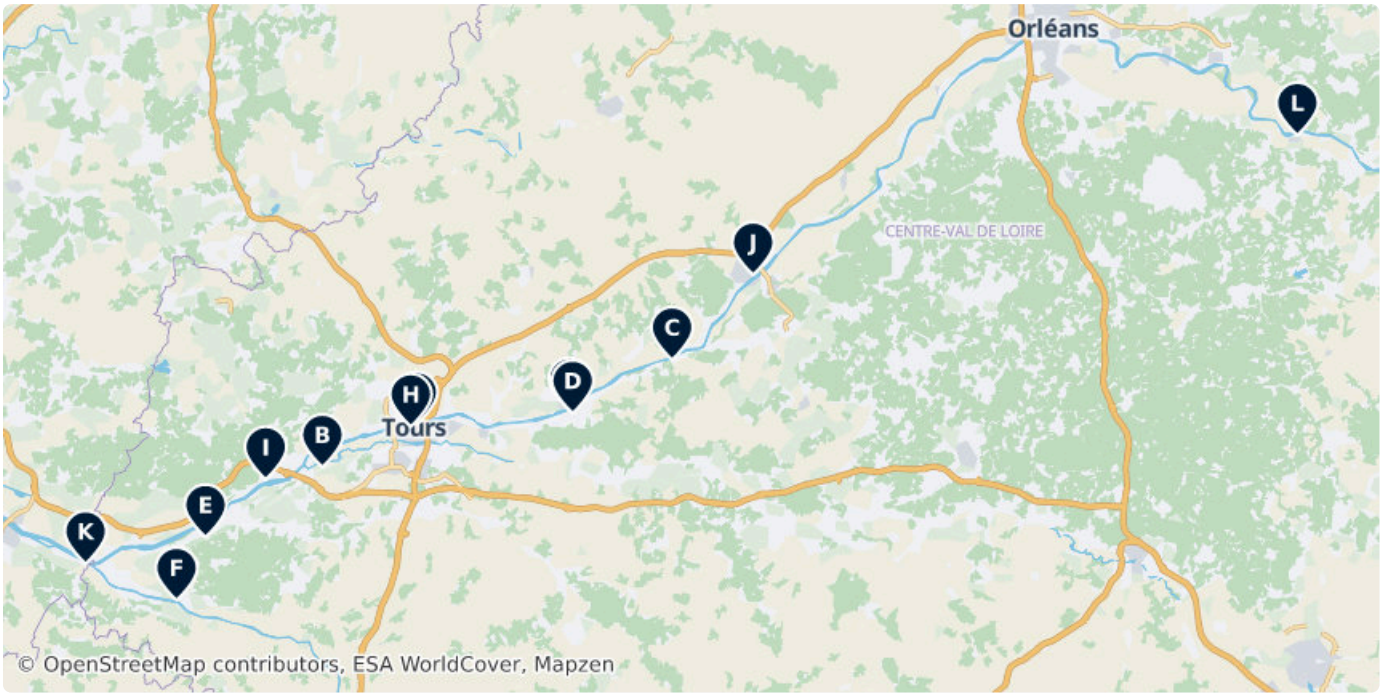
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Loire Valley Must-Sees

The Loire Valley features a dense concentration of French Renaissance architecture and medieval history. This selection includes the Royal Château d'Amboise and Clos Lucé, the final residence of Leonardo da Vinci. Architectural highlights range from the Flamboyant Gothic styles of Langeais and Montsoreau to the manicured gardens of Villandry. Religious heritage is represented by the Saint-Gatien Cathedral in Tours and the Late Gothic Blois Cathedral. These sites, spanning from the medieval fortress at Chinon to the moated Sully-sur-Loire, illustrate the region's strategic importance and royal legacy.





A Château d'Amboise

The Château d'Amboise is a château in Amboise, located in the Indre-et-Loire département of the Loire Valley in France.

37403 Amboise, France (47.41362, 0.98611)

Jan-Feb Mo–Su	09:00–12:30
Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:30
Apr-Jun Mo–Su	09:00–18:30
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Sep Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Nov 02-Nov 15 Mo–Su	09:00–17:30



B Château de Villandry

The Château de Villandry is a grand country house located in Villandry, in the département of Indre-et-Loire, France.

3 Rue Principale, 37510 Villandry, France (47.34055, 0.51437)

chateauvillandry.fr, +33 2 47 50 02 09

Nov 16-Nov 24 Mo–Su	09:00–12:30
Dec 26-Dec 31 Mo–Su	09:00–16:45

chateau-amboise.com, +33 02 47 57 00 98



C Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire

The Château de Chaumont, officially Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire, is a castle in Chaumont-sur-Loire, Centre-Val de Loire, France.

41150 Chaumont-sur-Loire, France (47.47913, 1.18185)

Jan 02-Jan 31 Mo–Su	10:00–17:30
Feb 01-Mar 31 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Apr 01-Jun 30 Mo–Su	10:00–19:00
Jul 01-Aug 31 Mo–Su	10:00–20:00
Sep 01-Oct 25 Mo–Su	10:00–19:00
Oct 26-Nov 01 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Nov 02-Dec 24 Mo–Su	10:00–17:30
Dec 26-Dec 31 Mo–Su	10:00–17:30

domaine-chaumont.fr/fr, +33254209922



D Clos Lucé

The Château du Clos Lucé, formerly called Manoir du Cloux, is a large château located in the center of Amboise, in the department of Indre...

Rue du Clos Lucé 2, 37400 (47.41031, 0.99206)

Jan Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Feb-Jun Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–20:00
Sep-Oct Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Nov-Dec Mo–Su	09:00–18:00

vinci-closluce.com, +33 2 47 57 00 73



E Château d'Ussé

Ussé is a castle in the Indre-et-Loire département, in France. The stronghold at the edge of the Chinon forest overlooking the Indre Valley...

37420 Rigny-Ussé, France (47.24976, 0.29131)

Feb 15-Mar 31 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Apr 01-Sep 30 Mo–Su	10:00–19:00
Oct 01-Nov 11 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00

chateaudusse.fr, +33247955405



F Chinon Castle

Château de Chinon is a château located on the bank of the river Vienne in Chinon, France. It was founded by Theobald I, Count of Blois.

Chinon 37500, France (47.16815, 0.23597)

forteressechinon.fr, +33 2 47 93 13 45



G Tours Cathedral

Tours Cathedral is a Roman Catholic church located in Tours, Indre-et-Loire, France, and dedicated to Saint Gatianus.

Place de la Cathédrale, 37000 Tours, France (47.39558, 0.69446)

paroisse-cathedrale-tours.catholique.fr..., +33 2 47 70 21 00



H Basilica of Saint Martin, Tours

The Basilica of St. Martin is a Roman Catholic basilica dedicated to Saint Martin of Tours, over whose tomb it was built.

3 Rue Descartes, Tours 37000, France (47.39293, 0.68296)



I Château de Langeais

The Château de Langeais is a 15th-century Flamboyant Gothic castle in Indre-et-Loire, France, built on a promontory created by the small...

93 Place Pierre de Brosse, Langeais 37130, France (47.32469, 0.40618)

Feb-Mar Mo–Su	09:30–17:30
Apr-Jun Mo–Su	09:30–18:30
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Dec Mo–Sa	10:00–17:00
Jan Mo–Su	10:00–17:00
Nov 01-Nov 11 Mo–Su	09:30–18:30
Nov 12-Nov 30 Mo–Su	10:00–17:00

chateau-de-langeais.com, +33247967260



J St-Louis Cathedral

Blois Cathedral, or the Cathedral of St. Louis of Blois, is a Late Gothic Catholic cathedral in Blois, France.

6 Petits Degrés Saint-Louis, Blois 41000, France (47.58847, 1.33647)



K Montsoreau Contemporary Art Museum

The Château de Montsoreau is a Flamboyant Gothic castle in the Loire Valley, directly built in the Loire riverbed.

7 Quai Alexandre Dumas, Montsoreau 49730, France (47.21556, 0.06235)

chateau-montsoreau.com/wordpress/en/, +33241671260



L Castle of Sully-sur-Loire

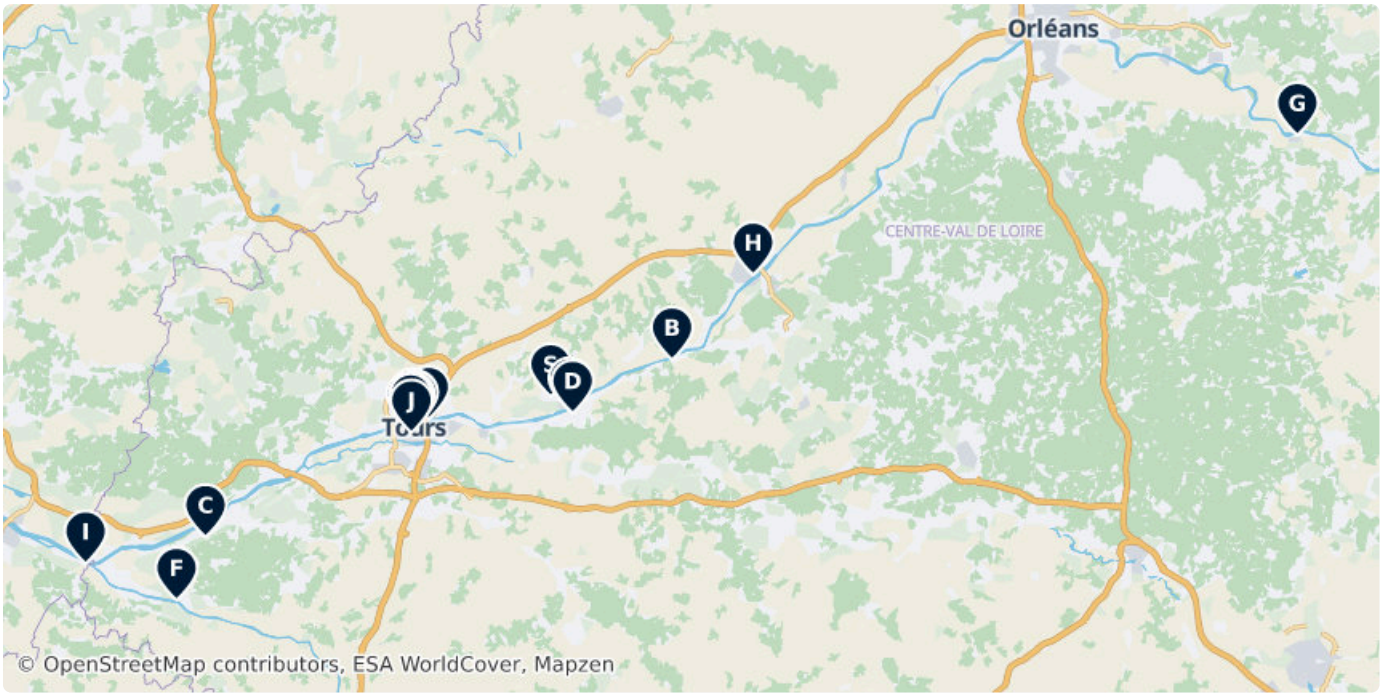
The Château de Sully-sur-Loire is a castle, converted to a palatial seigneurial residence, situated in the commune of Sully-sur-Loire,...

Sully-sur-Loire 45600, France (47.76768, 2.37529)

chateausully.fr, +33 2 38 36 36 86

Loire Valley Heritage Gems

The Loire Valley is home to some of France's most significant architectural treasures. This selection highlights the region's diverse heritage, featuring the royal châteaux of Amboise, Chinon, and Sully-sur-Loire, alongside Leonardo da Vinci's final residence at Clos Lucé. Beyond the grand estates, the list includes religious landmarks like the Basilica of Saint Martin and Tours Cathedral, as well as urban heritage sites like the 18th-century Pont Wilson and the Romanesque Tour Charlemagne. These sites collectively illustrate the evolution of French design from medieval fortifications to Renaissance elegance.





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chateau-amboise.com, +33 02 47 57 00 98

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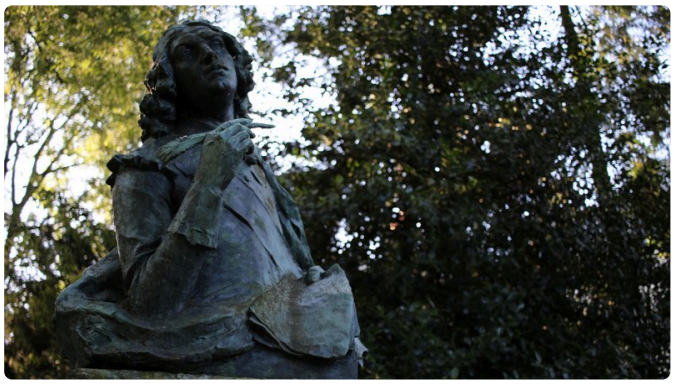
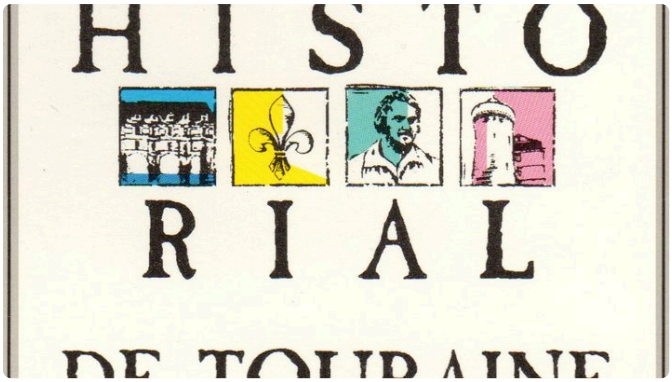


J Jardin des Prébendes d'Oé

Created in 1872 by the Bühler brothers, this English-style landscape garden in Tours features a diverse collection of trees, winding paths, and a central pond.

(Unnamed Road), Tours 37000, France (47.38506, 0.68438)

tours.fr/445-prebendes.htm



K Château de Tours

The Château de Tours is a castle located in Tours, Indre-et-Loire, France.

25 Avenue André Malraux, 37000, France (47.39708, 0.69364)

Tu–Su	14:00–18:00

tours.fr/culture/musees/chateau/



L Marmoutier Abbey, Tours

Marmoutier Abbey — also known as the Abbey of Marmoutier or Marmoutiers — was an early monastery outside Tours, Indre-et-Loire, France.

Quai de Marmoutier, 37100, France (47.40236, 0.71718)



M Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours

The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours is located in the bishop's former palace, near the cathedral St. Gatien, where it has been since 1910.

Place François Sicard 18 (47.39526, 0.69483)

Mo	09:00–12:45, 14:00–18:00
Tu	Closed
We–Su	09:00–12:45, 14:00–18:00

mba.tours.fr, +33 2 47 05 68 73

N Pont Wilson

Spanning the Loire River in Tours, this stone bridge was built between 1765 and 1778. It is the city's oldest bridge and was renamed in 1918 to honor Woodrow Wilson.

Pont Wilson, 37000, France (47.39912, 0.68523)



O Enceinte de Martinopole

These medieval fortifications once protected the Châteauneuf district of Tours. Dating from the late 10th century, the walls originally surrounded the religious complex dedicated to Saint Martin.

6 Rue Baleschoux, Tours 37000, France (47.39305, 0.68393)



P Tour Charlemagne

A Romanesque vestige of the original medieval Basilica of Saint Martin. Standing in the center of Tours, this tower survived the 18th-century demolition of the larger church structure.

10 Place de Châteauneuf, Tours 37000, France (47.39333, 0.68256)

Q Nouvel Olympia

A historic performance venue and cinema in Tours, featuring distinctive 20th-century architecture. It serves as a key cultural site in the city's theater district.

(47.39360, 0.68836)

cdrtours.fr

R Église Notre-Dame La Riche

A 15th-century Gothic church rebuilt in the 19th century. It is known for its intricate stained glass windows and its location in the historic heart of Tours.

2 Place de la Riche, Tours 37000, France (47.39397, 0.67656)

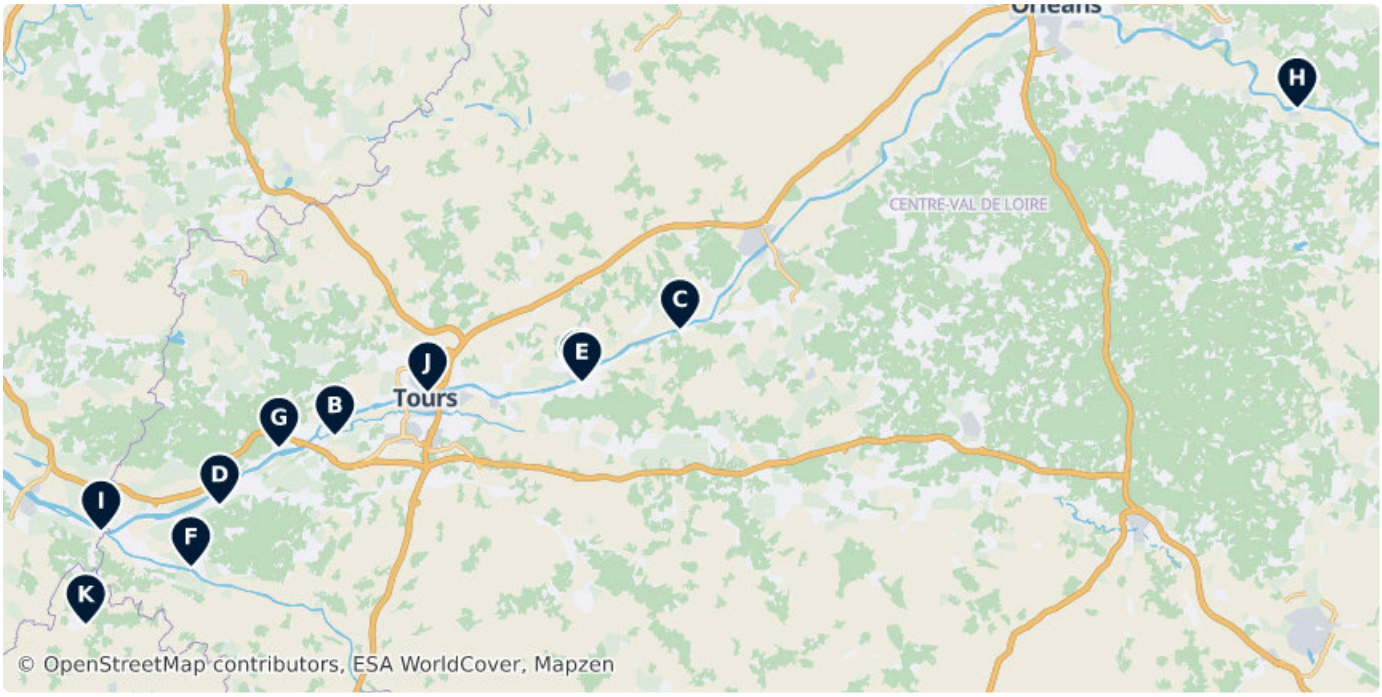
S Château de Nazelles

A 16th-century manor house located near Amboise, notable for its traditional tufa stone construction and troglodyte structures carved into the hillside.

16 Rue Tue-la-soif, Nazelles-Négron 37530, France (47.43177, 0.95004)

Loire Valley Castles

This collection of Loire Valley châteaux highlights the architectural evolution from medieval fortresses to Renaissance pleasure palaces. Key sites include the royal residence at Amboise, the intricate geometric gardens of Villandry, and Clos Lucé, the final home of Leonardo da Vinci. The list features the 'Sleeping Beauty' castle at Ussé, the river-bound Gothic structure of Montsoreau, and the dramatic overgrown ruins of Mothe-Chandeniers. These UNESCO-listed landmarks showcase Flamboyant Gothic styles and historic strongholds like the Royal Fortress of Chinon.





A Château d'Amboise

The Château d'Amboise is a château in Amboise, located in the Indre-et-Loire département of the Loire Valley in France.

37403 Amboise, France (47.41362, 0.98611)

Jan-Feb Mo–Su	09:00–12:30
Mar Mo–Su	09:00–17:30
Apr-Jun Mo–Su	09:00–18:30
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Sep Mo–Su	09:00–18:00
Nov 02-Nov 15 Mo–Su	09:00–17:30
Nov 16-Nov 24 Mo–Su	09:00–12:30



B Château de Villandry

The Château de Villandry is a grand country house located in Villandry, in the département of Indre-et-Loire, France.

3 Rue Principale, 37510 Villandry, France (47.34055, 0.51437)

chateauvillandry.fr, +33 2 47 50 02 09

Dec 26-Dec 31 Mo–Su	09:00–16:45

chateau-amboise.com, +33 02 47 57 00 98



C Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire

The Château de Chaumont, officially Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire, is a castle in Chaumont-sur-Loire, Centre-Val de Loire, France.

41150 Chaumont-sur-Loire, France (47.47913, 1.18185)

Jan 02-Jan 31 Mo–Su	10:00–17:30
Feb 01-Mar 31 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Apr 01-Jun 30 Mo–Su	10:00–19:00
Jul 01-Aug 31 Mo–Su	10:00–20:00
Sep 01-Oct 25 Mo–Su	10:00–19:00
Oct 26-Nov 01 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Nov 02-Dec 24 Mo–Su	10:00–17:30
Dec 26-Dec 31 Mo–Su	10:00–17:30

domaine-chaumont.fr/fr, +33254209922



D Château d'Ussé

Ussé is a castle in the Indre-et-Loire département, in France. The stronghold at the edge of the Chinon forest overlooking the Indre Valley...

37420 Rigny-Ussé, France (47.24976, 0.29131)

Feb 15-Mar 31 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Apr 01-Sep 30 Mo–Su	10:00–19:00
Oct 01-Nov 11 Mo–Su	10:00–18:00

chateaudusse.fr, +33247955405



E Clos Lucé

The Château du Clos Lucé, formerly called Manoir du Cloux, is a large château located in the center of Amboise, in the department of Indre...

Rue du Clos Lucé 2, 37400 (47.41031, 0.99206)

Jan Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Feb-Jun Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–20:00
Sep-Oct Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Nov-Dec Mo–Su	09:00–18:00

vinci-closluce.com, +33 2 47 57 00 73



F Chinon Castle

Château de Chinon is a château located on the bank of the river Vienne in Chinon, France. It was founded by Theobald I, Count of Blois.

Chinon 37500, France (47.16815, 0.23597)

forteressechinon.fr, +33 2 47 93 13 45



G Château de Langeais

The Château de Langeais is a 15th-century Flamboyant Gothic castle in Indre-et-Loire, France, built on a promontory created by the small...

93 Place Pierre de Brosse, Langeais 37130, France (47.32469, 0.40618)

Feb-Mar Mo–Su	09:30–17:30
Apr-Jun Mo–Su	09:30–18:30
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	09:00–19:00
Dec Mo–Sa	10:00–17:00
Jan Mo–Su	10:00–17:00
Nov 01-Nov 11 Mo–Su	09:30–18:30
Nov 12-Nov 30 Mo–Su	10:00–17:00

chateau-de-langeais.com, +33247967260



H Castle of Sully-sur-Loire

The Château de Sully-sur-Loire is a castle, converted to a palatial seigneurial residence, situated in the commune of Sully-sur-Loire,...

Sully-sur-Loire 45600, France (47.76768, 2.37529)

chateausully.fr, +33 2 38 36 36 86

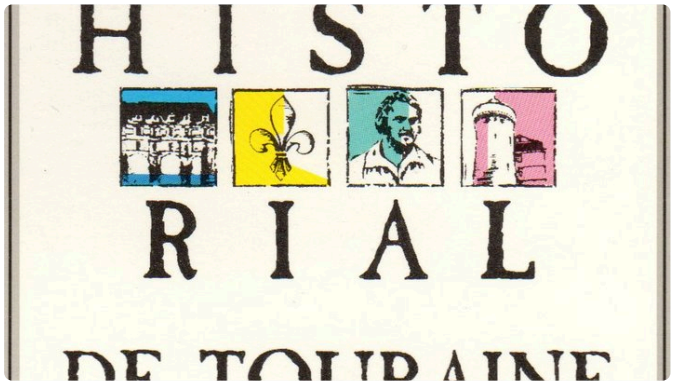


I Montsoreau Contemporary Art Museum

The Château de Montsoreau is a Flamboyant Gothic castle in the Loire Valley, directly built in the Loire riverbed.

7 Quai Alexandre Dumas, Montsoreau 49730, France (47.21556, 0.06235)

chateau-montsoreau.com/wordpress/en/, +33241671260



J Château de Tours

The Château de Tours is a castle located in Tours, Indre-et-Loire, France.

25 Avenue André Malraux, 37000, France (47.39708, 0.69364)

Tu–Su	14:00–18:00

tours.fr/culture/musees/chateau/



Château de la Mothe-Chandeniers

The Château de la Mothe-Chandeniers is a ruined castle in the commune of Les Trois-Moutiers in the Vienne department of France.

Route de Roiffé, 86120 Roiffé, France (47.09238, 0.03258)

Feb 13-Feb 28 Fr–Su	10:00–18:00
Mar We–Su	10:00–18:00
Apr-Jun Mo–Su	10:00–18:00
Jul-Aug Mo–Su	10:00–19:00

mothe-chandeniers.com

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