

## [Loches/Château de Chenonceau/Amboise/Chaumont-sur-Loire](#)

### **Loches**

Forever linked to legendary beauty Agnès Sorel, Loches is the cité médiévale of the valley, situated in the hills on the banks of the Indre. Known as the acropolis of the Loire, the château and its satellite buildings form a complex called the Cité Royale. The House of Anjou, from which the Plantagenets descended, owned the castle from 886 to 1205. The kings of France occupied it from the mid-13th century until Charles IX became king in 1560. Château de Loches is remembered for the belle des belles (beauty of beauties) Agnès Sorel. Inside is her tomb, where two angels guard her velvet cushion. Fouquet painted her as a practically topless Virgin Mary, with a disgruntled Charles VII looking on. (The original is in Antwerp; the château has a copy.)

Nearby, the Romanesque Collégiale St-Ours spans the 10th to 15th centuries. Sculpted figures, damaged but still attractive, decorate the portal. Stone pyramids (dubés) surmount the nave; the carving on the west door is exceptional. You may want to walk the ramparts and enjoy the view of the town, including a 15th-century gate and Renaissance inns.

### **Château de Chenonceau**

A Renaissance masterpiece, the Château de Chenonceau

In 1547, Henri II gave Chenonceau to his mistress, Diane de Poitiers. For a time this remarkable woman was virtually queen of France, infuriating Henri's dour wife, Catherine de Médicis. When Henri died, Catherine became regent (her eldest son was still a child) and forced Diane to return the jewelry Henri had given her and to abandon her beloved home. Catherine added her own touches, building a two-story gallery across the bridge — obviously inspired by her native Florence. Chenonceau is one of the most remarkable castles in France because it spans an entire river. .

### **Amboise**

Amboise is on the banks of the Loire in the center of vineyards known as Touraine-Amboise. The good news: This is a real Renaissance town. The bad news: Because it is so beautiful, tour buses overrun it, especially in summer.

#### Château d'Amboise

This 15th-century château, which dominates the town, was the first in France to reflect the Italian Renaissance. A combination of Gothic and Renaissance styles, it is associated with Charles VIII, who built it on a rocky spur separating the valleys of the Loire and the Amasse.

#### Château du Clos Lucé

Within 3km of the base of Amboise's château, this brick-and-stone building was constructed in the 1400s. It later served as a retreat for Anne de Bretagne, who, according to legend, spent a lot of time praying and meditating. Later, François I installed "the great master in all forms of art and science," Leonardo himself. Da Vinci lived here for 3 years, until his death in 1519.

### **Chaumont-sur-Loire**

Charles d'Amboise built Chaumont (Burning Mount) during the reign of Louis XII. Overlooking the Loire, it's approached by a long walk up from the village through a tree-studded park. The castle spans the period between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and its prize exhibit is a collection of medallions by the Italian artist Nini. .

## [Route Tours etc](#)

### **Tours**

#### **Château de Villandry**

The 16th-century-style gardens of the Renaissance Château de Villandry. A trio of superimposed cloisters with a water garden on the highest level. Every square of the gardens is like a geometric mosaic. A feudal castle once stood at Villandry. In 1536, Jean Lebreton, François I's chancellor, built the present château. Near the gardens is a terrace from which you can see the small village and its 12th-century church. A tearoom on-site, La Douce Terrasse

#### **Château de Langeais**

This is a medieval fortress, a formidable gray pile that dominates the town. It's one of the few châteaux actually on the Loire. The facade is forbidding, but once you cross the drawbridge, you'll find the apartments so richly decorated that they soften the effect. The castle dates from the 9th century. In a bedchamber known as the Crucifixion, the 15th-century black-oak four-poster bed is reputed to be one of the earliest known.

#### **Azay-le-Rideau**

Its machicolated towers and blue-slate roof pierced with dormers shimmer in the moat, creating a reflection like a Monet painting. The defensive medieval look is all for show: the Renaissance Château d'Azay-le-Rideau was created as a residence at an idyllic spot on the Indre River. Before you enter, circle the château and note the perfect proportions of the crowning achievement of the Renaissance in the Touraine. The Renaissance interior is a virtual museum.

#### **Chinon**

Exploring the Town & the Château On the banks of the Vienne, the town of Chinon consists of winding streets and turreted houses, many built in the 15th and 16th centuries in the heyday of the court. For the best view, drive across the river and turn right onto quai Danton. From this vantage point, you'll be able to see the castle in relation to the village and the river. The most typical street is rue Voltaire, lined with 15th- and 16th-century town houses. At no. 44, Richard the Lion-Hearted died on April 6, 1199. The Grand Carroi, in the heart of Chinon, served as the crossroads of the Middle Ages.

Château de Chinon consists of three buildings, two of which have been partially restored (they're still missing roofs). One of the restored buildings, Château du Milieu, dates from the 11th to the 15th centuries and contains the keep and clock tower, which houses a museum of Joan of Arc. A moat separates Château du Milieu from the other, Château du Coudray, which contains the Tour du Coudray, where Joan of Arc once stayed. In the 14th century, the Knights Templar were imprisoned here (they're responsible for the graffiti) before meeting violent deaths.

#### **Fontevraud-L'Abbaye**

You'll find the Plantagenet dynasty buried in the Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud. The kings, whose male line ended in 1485, were also the comtes d'Anjou, and they wanted to be buried in their native soil. In the 12th-century Romanesque church—with four Byzantine domes—are the remains of two English kings or

princes, including Henry II of England, the first Plantagenet king, and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, the most famous woman of the Middle Ages. Her crusading son, Richard the Lion-Hearted, was also entombed here. More intriguing than the tombs is the octagonal Tour d'Evraud, the last remaining Romanesque kitchen in France. Dating from the 12th century, it contains five of its original eight apses (half-rounded indentations originally conceived as chapels), each crowned with a conically roofed turret.

## Route

### **Château d'Azay-le-Ferron**

Het Château d'Azay-le-Ferron is een prachtig kasteel in het Parc Naturel Régional de la Brenne. Het kasteel werd oorspronkelijk gebouwd in de vijftiende eeuw en heeft in de eeuwen daarna verschillende aanbouwingen gekregen. Het kasteel is prachtig bewaard gebleven en is opengesteld voor publiek. Je kunt er de salon, eetzaal, slaapkamer en bibliotheek bewonderen en alle vertrekken staan vol met antieke meubels en kunst. Daarnaast vind je er ook een grote Franse tuinen met vele mooie bloemen en planten.

### **Argenton-sur-Creuse**

Argenton-sur-Creuse is een mooi stadje gelegen aan de voet van het Parc Naturel Régional de la Brenne. Het dorpje ligt aan de rivier de Creuse, waar je een prachtig uitzicht hebt op de pittoreske huisjes aan de rivier. Je kunt er genieten van vele restaurants en plaatselijke winkeltjes. In de stad vind je mooie bezienswaardigheden zoals kerken, bruggen en musea. Aan de rand van Argenton-sur-Creuse ligt het Musée archéologique d'Argentomagus. Het is een archeologisch museum, waar je opgravingen van Romeinse nederzettingen kunt

### **Gargillesse-Dampière**

Gargillesse-Dampière is een mooi stadje gelegen aan de oever van de rivier Gargillesse. Het stadje is uitgeroepen tot Les Plus Beaux Villages de France en is dus één van de mooiste dorpjes van Frankrijk. Het is een pittoresk dorpje met veel groen en mooie huisjes, waar je heerlijk kunt rondstruinen. Je oog valt er meteen op de kerk Église Saint-Laurent-et-Notre-Dame de Gargillesse-Dampierre. De Romaanse kerk is mooi versierd en heeft een crypte, waar je allerlei bijzondere fresco's kunt bewonderen. Ook moet je zeker een kijkje nemen bij het Château de Gargillesse. Het kasteel is gedeeltelijk verwoest maar je vindt er nog een grote poort met twee ronde torens.

Eglise de Notre-Dame de Gargillesse \*\*\*

## Route

### **Château d'Argy**

Château d'Argy is een mooi kasteel in Frankrijk gelegen in het noordwesten van Indre. Het kasteel bevindt zich in een groene omgeving, waar je lekker kunt wandelen en fietsen. Het kasteel werd in de vijftiende eeuw gebouwd en is geïnspireerd door Italië met vele mooie decoraties. Het kasteel heeft hoge torens en je vindt er een gebouw met een museum voor kunst en plattelands tradities. Rond het kasteel kun je genieten van een grote tuin met bloemen, planten en fonteinen. Er worden allerlei leuke evenementen georganiseerd.

### **Château de Bouges**

Château de Bouges is een mooi kasteel dat wordt omgeven door groene bossen en velden. Het kasteel ligt in het noorden van de Indre en werd in de achttiende eeuw gebouwd. Het kasteel werd geïnspireerd door het Paleis van Versailles en is dan ook erg mooi. Het kasteel is opengesteld voor publiek en je kunt er genieten van historische vertrekken en mooie kunstwerken. De omliggende tuinen zijn daarnaast ook zeer de moeite waard. Je kunt er een arboretum, bloemen tuin, franse tuin en een landschapstuin vinden. De tuinen zijn 8 hectare groot en je kunt er dus lekker wandelen.

### **Château de Valençay \*\*\***

Château de Valençay is een mooi kasteel gelegen in het noorden van de Indre. Het kasteel heeft een renaissance stijl en doet je denken aan een Loirekasteel zoals het Kasteel van Chambord. Het is een Gallo-Romeinse villa gebouwd in de tiende eeuw. Het kasteel is ontzettend luxueus ingericht en je waant je hier even in de middeleeuwen. Je kunt de verschillende vertrekken bewonderen en er is ook een museum, waar je alles leert over de geschiedenis van het kasteel, De tuinen zijn ook zeer indrukwekkend. Je kunt er een grote Franse tuin vinden en er lopen diverse dieren zoals pauwen en lama's.

## Route

### **Poitiers**

History fills this city, the ancient capital of Poitou, the northern part of Aquitaine. Everybody has passed through here—from Joan of Arc to Richard the Lion-hearted. Poitiers stands on a hill overlooking the Clain and Boivre rivers—a strategic location that tempted many conquerors. Charles Martel chased out the Muslims in a.d. 732 and altered the course of European civilization. Poitiers was the chief city of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who had her marriage to pious Louis VII annulled so she could wed England's Henry II. For those interested in history, this is one of the most fascinating towns in France. The Battle of Poitiers was fought on September 19, 1356, between the armies of Edward the Black Prince and King John of France. It was one of the three great English victories in the Hundred Years' War, distinguished by the use of the longbow in the skilled hands of English archers. After decades of slumber, the town has really come alive, with the opening of Futuroscope, a cinema theme park. The thriving student population (25,000 of Poitiers's 90,000 residents are students) adds vitality as well.

Baptistère St-Jean

Cathédrale St-Pierre

Eglise Notre-Dame-la-Grande

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/A3YwbohtxLRjXLQw9>

### **Bourges**

Once the capital of Aquitaine, Bourges lies in the heart of France; you can easily visit it from Orléans, at the eastern end of the Loire Valley (see chapter 8). The commercial and industrial center of Berry, this regional capital is still off the beaten path for most tourists, even though it boasts a rich medieval past. Its history extends far beyond the Middle Ages: In 52 b.c., Caesar called it the finest city in Gaul. Today Bourges remains a rather sleepy provincial town, awakened only by the life surrounding the Institut Universitaire de Technologie.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/PnhNKVoqtfGxqirP9>

### **Châteauroux**

Châteauroux is de mooie hoofdstad van de Indre. De stad heeft een gezellig centrum met veel winkels en restaurants. Je kunt er genieten van middeleeuwse straatjes zoals de Rue Grande en Rue de la Vieille Prison en bouwwerken zoals de Église Saint-André de Châteauroux. Je moet er zeker een kijkje nemen bij het Château Raoul. Het kasteel staat aan de oever van de rivier de Indre en je hebt er een mooi uitzicht. Op zoek naar een beetje cultuur? Dan moet je bij het Musée Hôtel Bertrand zijn. Hier kun je veel leren over de tijd van Napoleon.

Eglise Notre Dame de Chateauroux \*\*\*

Eglise Saint-Jean \*\*

### **Montrésor**

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/vAcHkQh2CUnVXuZu9>

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/KLCRfVcyd9HLWyG96>

## **Blois**

This town of 55,000 receives half a million visitors yearly, primarily to visit the Château de Blois . If time remains after a visit to the château, you may want to walk around the town. It's a piece of living history, with cobblestone streets and restored white houses with slate roofs and red-brick chimneys. Blois hugs a hillside overlooking the Loire. Some of its "streets" are mere alleyways originally laid out in the Middle Ages, or lanes linked by a series of stairs.

### Château de Blois

Blois is often called the "Versailles of the Renaissance," the second capital of France, and the "city of kings." Blois soon became a palace of exile. If you stand in the courtyard, you'll find the château is like an illustrated storybook of French architecture. The Hall of the Estates-General is a beautiful 13th-century work; Louis XII built the Charles d'Orléans gallery and the Louis XII wing from 1498 to 1501. Mansart constructed the Gaston d'Orléans wing between 1635 and 1637. Most remarkable is the François I wing, a French Renaissance masterpiece, containing a spiral staircase with ornamented balustrades and the king's symbol, the salamander. The château presents a son-et-lumière show in French from May to September, usually beginning at 10:30pm (but sometimes earlier, depending on the school calendar).