



EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

LOIRE VALLEY



CHATEAUX • SON ET LUMIÈRE

MUSEUMS • RESTAURANTS

GARDENS • FESTIVALS

HOTELS • MAPS • CHURCHES

VINEYARDS • TOURS • HISTORY

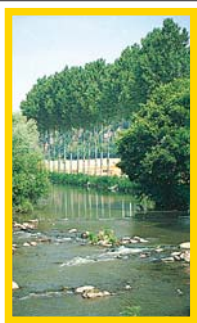


THE GUIDES THAT SHOW YOU WHAT
OTHERS ONLY TELL YOU

The Loire Valley



ANJOU
Pages 64-87



NORTH OF THE LOIRE
Pages 156-175

BASSE-NORMANDIE

BRETAGNE

NORTH OF THE LOIRE

Ile de Noirmoutier

Nantes

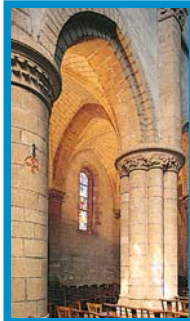
Angers

ANJOU

Cholet

LOIRE-ATLANTIQUE AND THE VENDEE

La Roche-sur-Yon



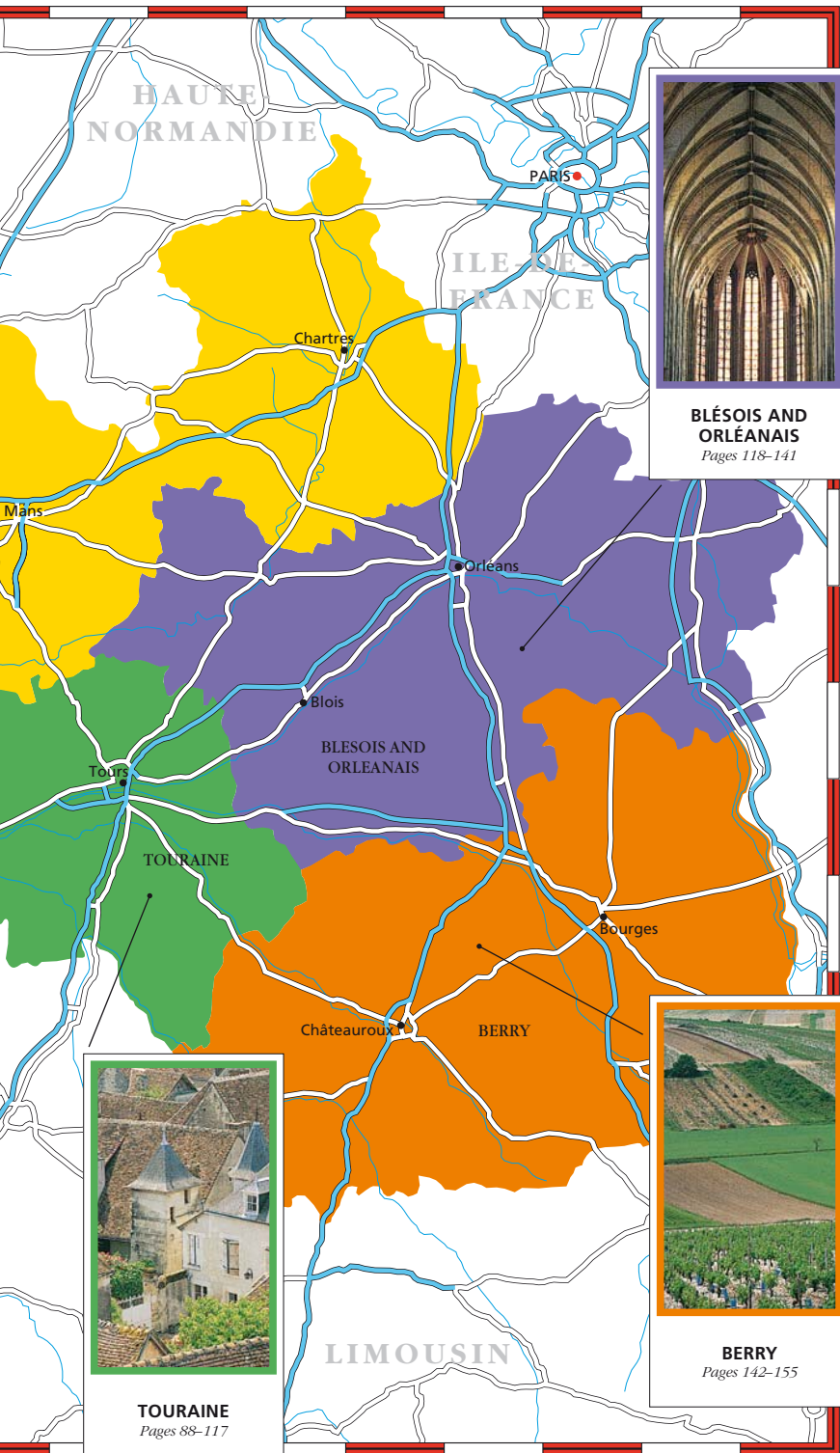
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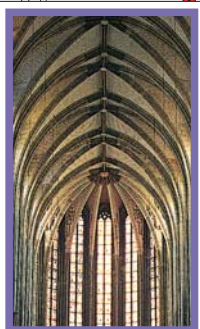
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POitou-CHARENTES



HAUTE
NORMANDIE

ILE-DE-
FRANCE



**BLÉSOIS AND
ORLÉANAIS**
Pages 118-141

Chartres

PARIS

Orléans

Blois

BLESOIS AND
ORLÉANAIS

Tours

TOURAINÉ

Bourges

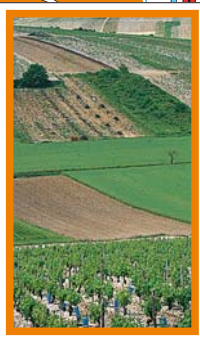
Châteauroux

BERRY

LIMOUSIN



TOURAINÉ
Pages 88-117



BERRY
Pages 142-155



EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

LOIRE VALLEY







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LOIRE VALLEY

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LONDON, NEW YORK,
MELBOURNE, MUNICH AND DELHI
www.dk.com

PRODUCED BY Duncan Baird Publishers
London, England

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Reproduced by Colourscan (Singapore)
Printed and bound in China by Toppan Printing Co.
(Shenzhen Ltd)

First American Edition, 1996
07 08 09 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published in the United States by Dorling Kindersley
Publishing, Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York 10014

Reprinted with revisions 1997 (twice), 1999, 2000, 2001,
2003, 2004, 2007

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London
A Penguin Company

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Published in Great Britain by Dorling Kindersley Limited.

A CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION RECORD IS
AVAILABLE FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

ISSN 1542-1554
ISBN 978-0-78949-733-8

FLOORS ARE REFERRED TO THROUGHOUT IN ACCORDANCE
WITH EUROPEAN USAGE; IE THE "FIRST FLOOR"
IS THE FLOOR ABOVE GROUND LEVEL.

Front cover main image: *Château de Chenonceau, Touraine*

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King Louis XIV portrayed as
Jupiter, conquering La Fronde



The town of Argenton-sur-Creuse

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Stained-glass portrait of Agnès Sorel

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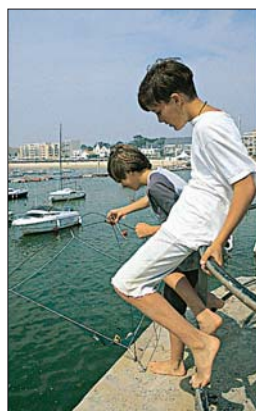
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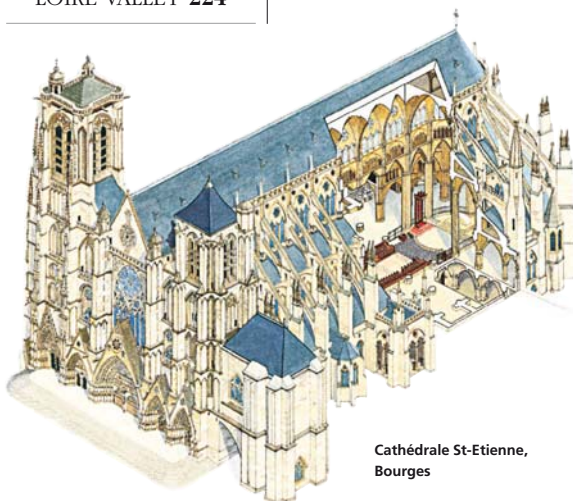
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Young boys fishing at Pornichet
marina in Loire-Atlantique



Cathédrale St-Etienne,
Bourges

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

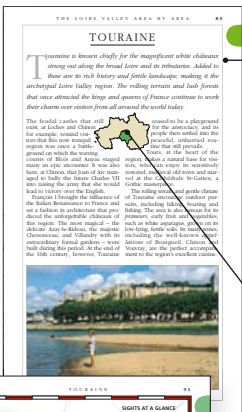
This guide will help you get the most from your stay in the Loire Valley. It provides both expert recommendations and detailed practical information. *Introducing the Loire Valley* maps the region and sets it in its historical and cultural context. *The Loire Valley Area by Area* describes the

important sights, with maps, photographs and illustrations. Suggestions for food, drink, accommodation, shopping and activities are in *Travellers' Needs*, and the *Survival Guide* has tips on everything from the French telephone system to getting to the Loire and travelling around the region.

THE LOIRE VALLEY AREA BY AREA

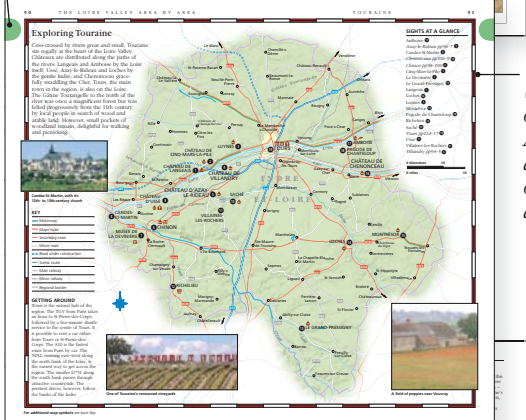
In this guide, the Loire Valley has been divided into six regions, each of which has its own chapter. A map of these regions can be found inside the front cover of the book. The most interesting places to visit in each region have been numbered and plotted on a *Regional Map*.

Each area of the Loire Valley can be quickly identified by its colour coding.



1 Introduction
The landscape, history and character of each region is described here, showing how the area has developed over the centuries and what it has to offer the visitor today.

A locator map shows the region in relation to the whole of the Loire Valley.



2 Regional Map
This gives an illustrated overview of the whole region. All the sights are numbered, and there are also useful tips on getting around by car and public transport.

Features and story boxes highlight special or unique aspects of a particular sight.

3 Detailed information on each sight
All the important towns and other places to visit are described individually. They are listed in order, following the numbering on the Regional Map. Within each town or city, there is detailed information on important buildings and other major sights.

Château de Langeais
The 12th-century tower was built by the Count of Blois, Geoffrey II, as a stronghold against the king. It is a masterpiece of French Gothic architecture.

Château de Chinon
The tower was built by the Count of Blois, Geoffrey II, as a stronghold against the king. It is a masterpiece of French Gothic architecture.

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Château de Chinon
The tower was built by the Count of Blois, Geoffrey II, as a stronghold against the king. It is a masterpiece of French Gothic architecture.

LIFE IN A MEDIEVAL CHATEAU
The life of a medieval noble was one of luxury and power. The castle was a center of political and military activity.

4 Major Towns

An introduction covers the history, character and geography of the town. The main sights are described individually and plotted on a Town Map.

Exploring Towns

The glorious Cathedral city of Tournai, popular with pilgrims seeking to gain the seven keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, is a perfect town for exploring Tournai's impressive churches. The 'Seven Keys' is a medieval walk that imaginatively retraces, across exploitation, war, there is a major Catholic shrine and town filled with pilgrims seeking to gain the seven keys. It is a historical pilgrimage route for centuries. For details see the special appendix to the book on the 1000 routes. It has kept its religious, spiritual charm.

Heart of Tournai
The heart of the town is the magnificent Gothic Cathedral of St. Pierre and St. Paul. The main square is the Place du Grand Marché. The town is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

St. Pierre and St. Paul
The main church of Tournai, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. It is the largest Gothic church in Belgium. The choir is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. The choir is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture.

St. Nicholas
A small church in the heart of the town. It is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. The choir is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture.

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A Visitors' Checklist gives contact points for tourist and transport information, plus details of market days and local festival dates.

The town map shows all major through-roads as well as minor streets of interest to visitors. All the sights are plotted, along with the bus and train stations, parking, tourist offices and churches.

5 Street-by-Street Map

Towns or districts of special interest to visitors are shown in detailed 3D, with photographs of the most important sights, giving a bird's-eye view of the area.

Château de Chenonceau

Chenonceau, spanning romantically across the River Cher, is considered by many the loveliest of the Loire châteaux. Renowned for elegant architecture and world-famous gardens, the 16th-century chateau was built over the ruins of a castle destroyed in 1574. The chateau was built over the ruins of a castle destroyed in 1574. The chateau was built over the ruins of a castle destroyed in 1574.

Chapel

The Chapel has a combined Gothic and Renaissance style. It is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. The choir is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture.

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For all the top sights, a Visitors' Checklist provides the practical information you will need to plan your visit.

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6 Top Sights

These are given two or more pages. Important buildings are dissected to reveal their interiors.

Stars indicate the works of art or features that no visitor should miss.





INTRODUCING THE LOIRE VALLEY



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DISCOVERING THE LOIRE VALLEY

This fertile land was once the playground of kings and their courts, who left behind a trail of magnificent châteaux ranging from exuberant Renaissance to Classical grandeur. But the Loire Valley offers more than just castles. Ancient cloistered abbeys, majestic cathedrals such as those at Chartres and Bourges, and prosperous modern



Statue of
Joan of Arc

cities like Tours are all part of the rich heritage of this engaging area. Picturesque rural Loire, with its dense forests, misty marshes, windswept coastline and neat vineyards, tempts the visitor off the beaten track. These two pages give an at-a-glance flavour of each region, plus a quick guide to where to go and what to see and do.



Château d'Azay-le-Rideau on an island in the Indre River

ANJOU

- Tales of the riverbank
- Striking Saumur and the Abbaye de Fontevraud
- Regal Angers

The landscape of Anjou is threaded with sparkling tributary rivers creating ideal roaming and picnic territory. The **Corniche Angevine** (see pp68) route curves lazily around the south side of the Loire and is dotted with unspoiled villages and vineyards, while the **Basses Vallées** (see p70) are a magnet for bird-watchers. Fascinating tufa caves, once troglodyte dwellings, are now chic homes and restaurants.

Amid lush countryside to the east lie two must-see sights: **Saumur** (see pp80–83) with its hilltop château and the vast **Abbaye de Fontevraud** (see pp86–7), France's most complete abbey complex.

Angers (see pp72–7), straddling the River Maine,

was once the capital of an enormous empire. Its forbidding château contrasts with today's modern city, bursting with culture and energy.

TOURAINÉ

- Renaissance châteaux
- Prosperous Tours
- Delicious ruby red wines

Breathtaking château architecture characterises Touraine. Be a king for a day and check out the fairytale turrets of Renaissance pleasure-palaces such as **Azay-le-Rideau** (see pp96–7) and **Chenonceau** (see pp106–9), with its striking arched gallery spanning the River Cher. Head to **Villandry** (see pp94–5) for fine ornamental gardens and ponds.

Regional capital **Tours** (see pp112–17) is a great base for visiting the châteaux. Its lively old quarter is crammed with cafés and boutiques, yet still retains a medieval charm. In

contrast, the area's rolling pastoral terrain attracts lovers of outdoor pursuits. Cycling among these fertile fields will work up a thirst for the fine Chinon and Bourgeuil wines.

BLÉSOIS AND ORLÉANAIS

- Chambord: *folie de grandeur*
- Grand medieval towns
- Lush landscapes

Teeming with wild boar and deer, this area boasts some magnificent royal hunting lodges. **Château de Chambord** (see pp132–5), the largest château in the Loire, is a truly exuberant, Disney-like example.

Blois (see pp124–7) and **Orléans** (see pp138–9) were once powerful medieval strongholds. Now busy commercial towns, their charming old quarters are full of interest to the visitor. A casualty of war, Orléans



A quiet street of the medieval town of Blois

has been reconstructed, but retains some delightful historic buildings. Blois has many steep cobbled streets and half-timbered houses.

For a more bucolic experience, the scenery of the **Sologne** (see p141), is scattered with pretty woods and lakes, while architecture fans will adore the water gates, stone buildings and bridges of **Vendôme** (see p122).

BERRY

- Remote rural villages
- Gallo-Roman Bourges
- La Brenne's wooded beauty
- Sancerre wine estates



The rolling vineyards around the town of Sancerre

This rural area is surprisingly overlooked by many tourists. **Bourges** (see pp150–53), the region's capital, is an architectural gem with a majestic cathedral. Of the many fine old buildings in this medieval city, Palais Jacques Coeur is the finest.

The region boasts a lush landscape where remote villages punctuate undulating hills, ancient woodlands and lakes, and swathes of wheat fields. Berry is a haven for nature enthusiasts, and at the **Parc Naturel Régional de la Brenne** (see p146), bird-watchers can find a wide variety of species.

In the eastern corner sits **Sancerre** (see p154), where you can enjoy its celebrated wine from dry, zingy whites to soft, fruity reds made from vines that grow on chalky limestone slopes.

NORTH OF THE LOIRE

- Great fishing and walking
- Cathedral city of Chartres
- Car racing in Le Mans

Once the haunt of poets and painters, today this region is a paradise for anglers and walkers. The **Alpes Mancelles** (see p161), with its heather-cloaked hills and stream-lined gorges, is best visited on foot. Cruising the rivers by boat is a fun way to discover pretty Loire tributaries. Fringed by trees, the Sarthe glides past the **Abbaye de Solesmes** (see p162), while the Mayenne Valley offers views of hilltop villages and one of the area's main towns, **Laval** (see p160).

Along the banks of the Loir, early churches mark the pilgrim trail. The magical Gothic spires of the cathedral of **Chartres** (see pp171–5) rising up from the surrounding wheat fields provide an unforgettable sightseeing experience. Racing enthusiasts should head for **Le Mans** (see pp164–7), which also has a pretty historic centre.

LOIRE-ATLANTIQUE AND THE VENDÉE

- Vibrant Nantes
- Navigating the Marais Poitevin
- Wind-swept Atlantic coast

Geographically this region faces out to the bracing Atlantic Ocean and turns its back on the châteaux. At the gateway to the ocean, **Nantes** (see pp190–93) was once the



The early Gothic cathedral of Notre-Dame in Chartres

busiest port in France, and its riches were gained from ship-building and a thriving slave trade. It is a fascinating place to explore, with many historic buildings, notably the castle and the Musée des Beaux Arts, both bursting with treasures. The elegant shopping streets also have a good choice of cafés and restaurants.

Battling constantly against a sea invasion, the low-lying landscape of the **Marais Poitevin** (see pp182–5) is strikingly diverse, with a vast range of wildlife. The wet marsh, known as “Venise Verte”, is ideally explored by *barque*, the traditional flat-bottomed boat. Punt through the maze of waterways edged by willows and take a break at one of the pretty ports.

At the Vendée coast, wide sandy beaches and thundering waves act as a magnet for windsurfers.



The beach of La Baule, in the Loire-Atlantique

Putting the Loire on the Map

The Loire Valley lies in central France, bordered by the regions of Brittany, Normandy and the Ile de France to the north, the Massif Central and Poitou to the south, Burgundy to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The river itself, the longest in France, flows for 1,020 km (634 miles) from its source in the Cévennes to the Atlantic Ocean just south of Nantes at St-Nazaire. The region covers an area of 71,228 sq km (27,500 sq miles) and has a population of about 5.7 million.



KEY

- Area covered by this guide
- Ferry service
- Airport
- Motorway / Motorway characteristics
- Major road
- Railway line

0 kilometres 100
 0 miles 100





Satellite view of the River Loire and the large fields of its flood-plain

The Loire as it passes through Tours



A PORTRAIT OF THE LOIRE VALLEY

The Loire Valley, world-famous for its beautiful *châteaux*, has long been described as exemplifying *la douceur de vivre*: it combines a leisurely pace of life, a mild climate, mellow wines and the gentle ways of its inhabitants. The overall impression conveyed by the region is one of an unostentatious taste for the good things in life.

In this central region of France, the people have neither the brisk, sometimes brusque, demeanour of their northern counterparts, nor the excitable nature of the southern provinces. They get on peacefully with their lives, benefiting from the prosperity generated not only by the region's centuries old popularity with French and foreign visitors alike, but also by a fertile soil and a favourable climate, which rarely succumbs to extremes of heat or cold.

The Loire as a region is far from being a cultural and historical anachronism, although the wealth



Cyclist on the Ile de Noirmoutier causeway

of well-preserved historical monuments harks back to the past. Many local people are surprisingly proud of the nuclear power stations at Avoine-Chinon and at St-Laurent-des-Eaux near Beaugency, both symbols of the region's role in the technological revolution. The well-publicized (and successful) campaign in the mid-1980s to have the high-speed TGV train rerouted was based not on any intrinsic dislike of new-fangled schemes, but on alarm at the potential damage to the bottles of wine stored in their underground cellars close to the planned track.



The bridge across the Loire at Blois, one of several historic bridges in the region



Folk dancers in costume at the Château de Blois

Yet the way of life in the Loire Valley remains largely anchored to the traditional values of *la France profonde*, the country's conservative heartland – seeking to perpetuate a way of life that has proved its worth over the centuries. This is particularly true of the Berry, the easternmost region of the Loire covered in this guide. It is the geographical centre of the country – several villages claim the honour of being situated at “the heart of France” – and it seems to the visitor charmingly off the beaten track. It comes as no surprise to discover that folk traditions and, some say, witchcraft are still part of everyday life in some of these timeless villages. In November 2000, UNESCO made the Loire Valley one of its protected areas of natural beauty.

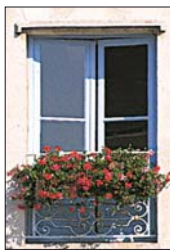
LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The opportunity to stay in a private château is one of the many treats for visitors to the Loire Valley, where hospitality is a serious business. Even in Orléans, whose proximity to Paris has led to its reputation as a dormitory town, a warm welcome in hotels and

restaurants is assured. And in the towns and villages of Touraine and Anjou, conviviality is everywhere apparent. The many fairs, fêtes and festivals devoted to local wines and produce – garlic, apples, melons or even chitterling sausages – bear witness to the large part, even by French standards, that food and drink play in the social life of these old provinces.

They also play a major role in the region's economy: around 12 per cent of the local population is involved in agriculture or the food industry in some way. Many a *primeur* (early fruit or vegetable) in the markets and restaurants of Paris has been transported from the fertile fields and orchards beside the Loire, and the region's melons and asparagus are sold all over the country. So are the button mushrooms, known as *champignons de Paris* (Paris mushrooms), grown in tufa quarries near Saumur.

Although some local wines are reputed not to travel well, many of them do so very successfully, not only in France but also abroad, adding to the region's prosperity. In terms of the volume of production, the



Colourful summer display



The Loire at Amboise, dotted with sandbanks



A walk along a river bank at Rochefort-sur-Loire, one of many country pursuits to enjoy

region ranks third in France and, although production is on a smaller scale than the famous wine giants of Bordeaux and Burgundy, the quality and popularity of Loire wines are both increasing. Sancerre and Muscadet are probably the best known, but others, such as Vouvray and Bourgueil, are also much in demand.

The restaurants and hotel dining rooms of the Loire Valley take full advantage of the excellent produce available locally – no wonder so many Parisian families have been attracted to the area. Just as once the nobility of France established their châteaux and stately homes in the area, now wealthy Parisians are flocking to the Loire Valley to buy *résidences secondaires*. The influx has been swelled in recent years with the advent of the TGV, which takes less than an hour to reach the region from Paris.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In the west of the region, Nantes has adapted to changing economic times. The closure of its once-flourishing shipyards has led to a new focus on advanced technology and international

business. In the mid-1980s a science park, the Technopole Atlantique, was built on the banks of the River Erdre, an electronic research institute opened and the city acquired a World Trade Centre (*Centre Atlantique du Commerce International*). Yet here, too, the broad streets and avenues (formerly watercourses) create a feeling of spaciousness that helps to perpetuate the mood of *douceur de vivre* beside the new economic dynamism.

In the same way, Tours' chic new conference centre in the heart of the city does not seem to have detracted from the bustle of streets often thronged with foreign students. They have come to learn to speak what is alleged to be the purest French in France. By "pure", the experts mean well-modulated speech devoid of any strong accent – a fine symbol for a populace admired for being pleasant and relaxed.



Sign offering wine-tastings



Locally grown asparagus

From Defence to Decoration

Over the centuries, châteaux in the Loire Valley gradually developed from feudal castles, designed purely as defensive fortresses, into graceful pleasure palaces. Once the introduction of firearms put an end to the sieges that medieval castles were built to withstand, comfort and elegance became key status symbols. Many defensive elements evolved into decorative features: watchtowers became fairy-tale turrets, moats served as reflecting pools and crenellations were transformed into ornamental friezes. During the Renaissance, Italian craftsmen added features such as galleries and formal gardens, and carved decoration became increasingly intricate.



Château d'Angers in 1550, before its towers were lowered

Slate and stone walls

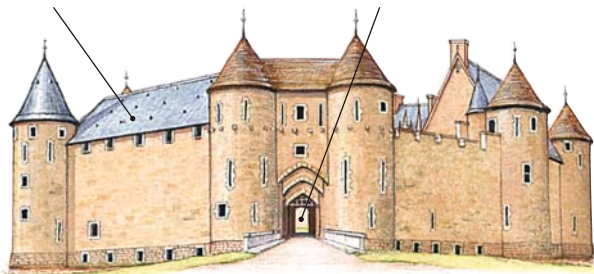
Fortifications with pepper pot towers removed



Angers (see pp74-5) was built between 1228 and 1240 as a mighty cliff-top fortress, towering over the River Maine. Along its curtain wall were spaced 17 massive round towers. These would originally have been 30 m (98 ft) high before their pepper pot towers were removed in the 16th century.

Slate roof

Postern

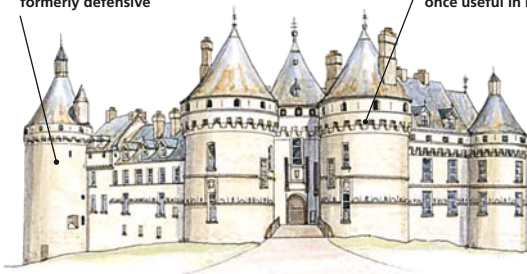


Ainay-le-Vieil (see p148), dating from the 12th century, contrasts two styles. An octagonal walled fortress, with nine massive towers topped by pepper pot turrets and lit by arrow slits, was entered through a huge medieval postern gate across a drawbridge that crossed the moat. Inside, however, there is a charming, early 16th-century Renaissance home.

Ainay-le-Vieil's delightful living quarters, hidden inside an octagonal fortress

Circular tower,
formerly defensive

Corbelled walkways,
once useful in battle

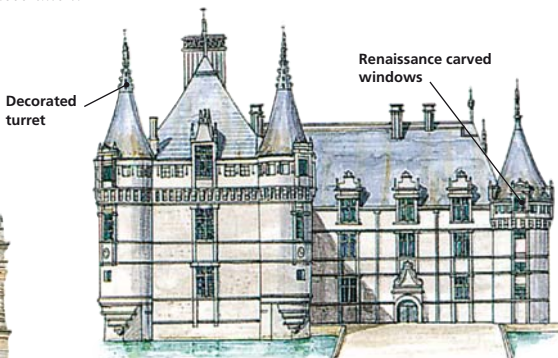


Chaumont (see p128) stands on the site of a 12th-century fortress, destroyed in 1465 by Louis XI to punish its owners for disloyalty. The château was rebuilt from 1498 to 1510 in the Renaissance style. Although it has a defensive appearance, with circular towers, corbelled walkways and a gatehouse, these features have been lightened with Renaissance decoration.

Chaumont's walls are carved with the crossed Cs of Charles II d'Amboise, whose family rebuilt the château.



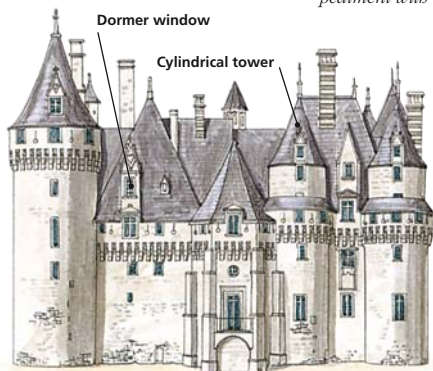
Decoration on the north
façade of Azay-le-Rideau



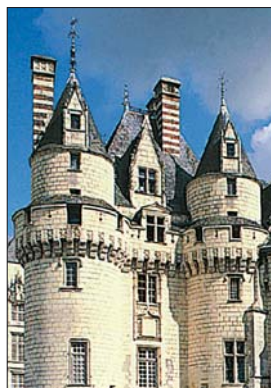
Azay-le-Rideau (see pp96-7), its elegant turrets reflected in a peaceful lake, was built from 1518 to 1527 and is considered one of the best-designed Renaissance châteaux. Its interior staircase, behind an intricately decorated pediment with three storeys of twin bays, is very striking.

Renaissance carved
windows

Decorated
turret



Ussé (see p101) was built in 1462 as a battlemented fortress. Later, the walls overlooking the main courtyard were modified during the Renaissance, with dormer windows and pilasters. In the 17th century the north wing was replaced by terraced gardens.



Château d'Ussé, once a fortress,
now an aristocratic château

Inside the Châteaux



Stone carving
on staircase

The typical Loire Valley Château boasted several large, lavishly furnished reception rooms, adorned with luxurious tapestries and paintings and featuring decorative panelling and ceilings. The main rooms included the Grand Salon, often with an imposing fireplace, and an elegant dining room. The gallery was a focal point for

host and guests to meet to discuss the events of the day, admire the views over the grounds or the paintings displayed on the gallery walls. The châtelain's private rooms, and those reserved for honoured (particularly royal) guests, were grouped in a separate wings, while servants were housed in the attics.



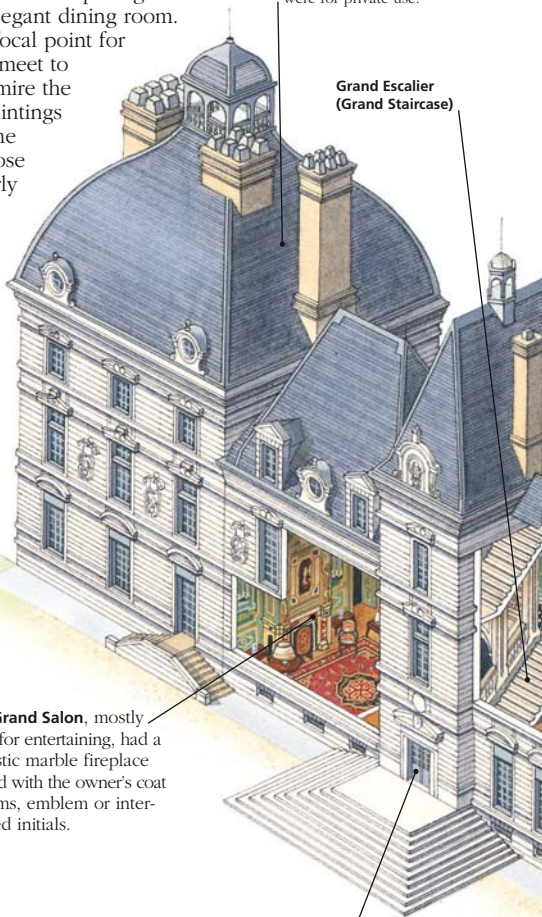
Chairs were often spindly – elegant but unomfortable. The more omfortable models with armrests might be overed with pre ious tapestries, as with this one from Cheverny, upholstered in Aubusson.



The Grand Escalier, or Escalier d'Honneur (grand staircase), had richly carved balustrades and an elaborately decorated ceiling, such as this magnificent Renaissance staircase at Serrant (see p69). The staircase led to the owner's private suites, as well as to state guest bedrooms and rooms used on special occasions, such as the armoury.

Apartments in one wing were for private use.

Grand Escalier
(Grand Staircase)



The Grand Salon, mostly used for entertaining, had a majestic marble fireplace carved with the owner's coat of arms, emblem or intertwined initials.

Main entrance



Galleries, like this one at Beauregard (see pp130–31), were where owners and guests met to converse or to be entertained. They were often hung with family and other portraits.



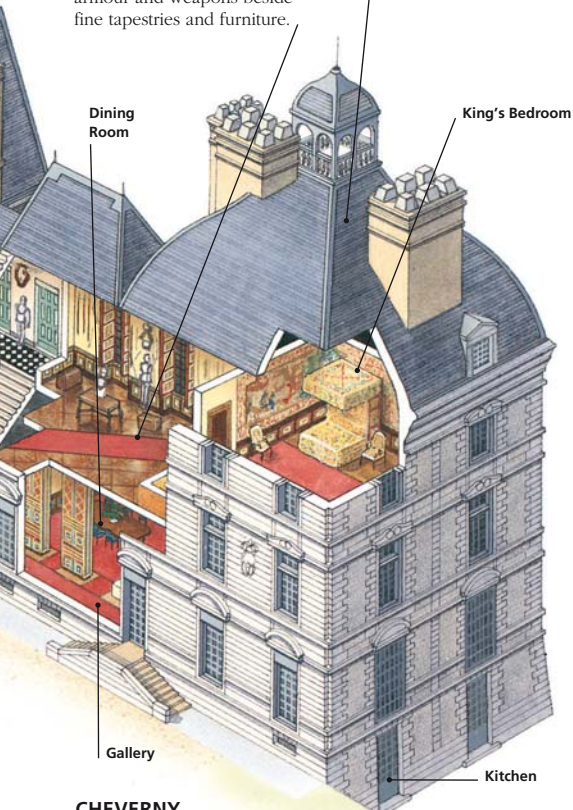
State dining rooms, for receiving important visitors, were as sumptuously furnished and decorated as the other main reception rooms. This one in Chaumont (see p128) features Renaissance furniture.

Château rooms were filled with costly tapestries, paintings and fine furniture, and attention was paid to detail. Decorative features, such as this French Limoges enamel plaque, or intricately carved wooden panelling were common. Even the tiles on stoves that heated the huge rooms were often painted.

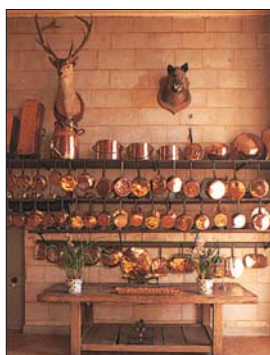


The Salle d'Armes, or armoury, displayed suits of armour and weapons beside fine tapestries and furniture.

The east wing was reserved for important guests.



The King's Bedroom was kept permanently ready for a royal visit. Under the *droit de gîte* (right of lodging), château owners were bound to provide accommodation to the king in return for a building permit. This room, at Cheverny (see p130), was used frequently.



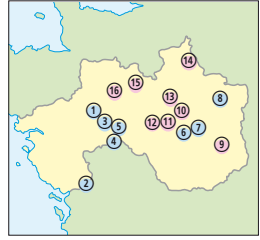
CHEVERNY

A dignified Classical building in white tufa, Cheverny (see p130) has scarcely been altered since it was built between 1620 and 1634. The central section, containing the staircase, is flanked by two symmetrical wings, each consisting of a steep-roofed section and a much larger pavilion with a domed roof. The interior is decorated in 17th-century style.

Kitchens were in the cellars, or separately housed. Huge spits for roasting whole carcasses were worked by elaborate mechanisms. Though often dark, the kitchens gleamed with an array of copper pots and pans, like these at Montgeoffroy (see p71).

Churches and Abbeys

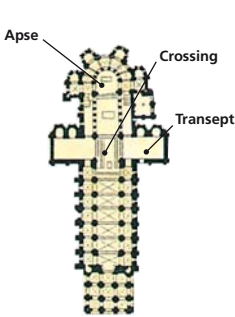
The Loire Valley is well-endowed with medieval ecclesiastical architecture, ranging from tiny Romanesque village churches to major Gothic cathedrals like Chartres and Tours. In the early Middle Ages, the Romanesque style predominated, characterized by straightforward ground plans, round arches and relatively little decoration. By the 13th century, the rib vaulting and flying buttresses of Gothic architecture had emerged, enabling builders to create taller, lighter churches and cathedrals. The Late Gothic style in France, often referred to as Flamboyant Gothic, features window tracery with flowing lines licking upwards like flames.



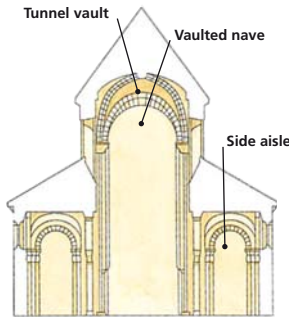
LOCATOR MAP

- I Romanesque architecture
- II Gothic architecture

ROMANESQUE FEATURES



The plan of *St-Benoît-sur-Loire* is typical of Romanesque architecture, with its cross shape and rounded apse.

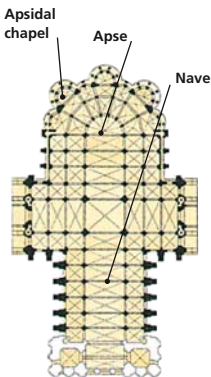


A section of *La Collégiale de St-Aignan-sur-Cher* shows Romanesque tunnel vaulting. The vaulted side aisles provide added support for the high nave.

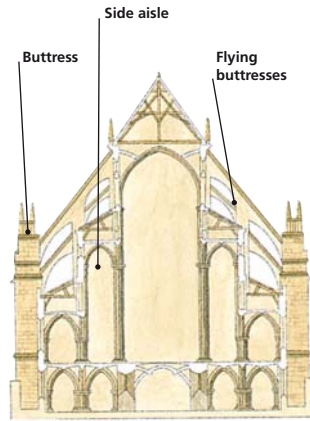


The round arches of *St-Aignan* are typically Romanesque, while the pointed nave bays predict the Gothic style.

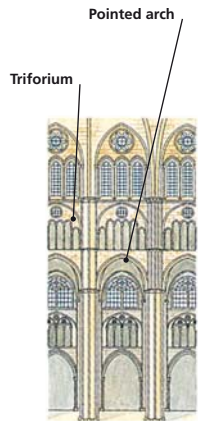
GOTHIC FEATURES



The plan of *Chartres Cathedral* shows its very wide nave, and its apse ringed with chapels.



A section of *St-Etienne* in Bourges reveals its five divisions with two aisles on either side of the nave. The building also has five portals rather than the usual three.



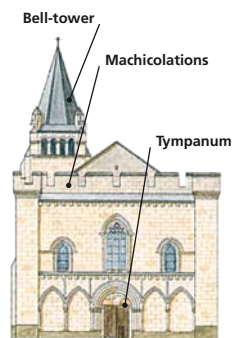
Pointed arches withstand greater stress and allow large windows, as in the nave at Bourges.

WHERE TO FIND ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE

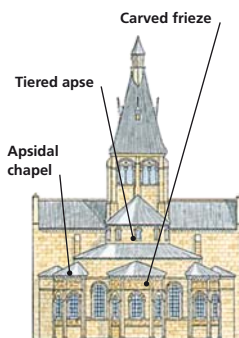
- ① St-Maurice, Angers pp72–3
- ② L'Abbaye St-Vincent, Nieul-sur-l'Autise pp182–3
- ③ Notre-Dame, Cunault p79
- ④ L'Abbaye de Fontevraud pp86–7
- ⑤ St-Maurice, Chinon pp98–9
- ⑥ La Collégiale, St-Aignan-sur-Cher p129
- ⑦ St-Eusice, Selles-sur-Cher pp24–5
- ⑧ La Basilique de St-Benoît-sur-Loire p140

WHERE TO FIND GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

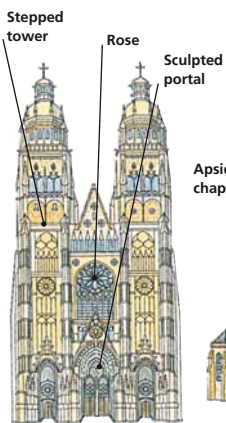
- ⑨ St-Etienne, Bourges pp152–3
- ⑩ St-Louis, Blois pp124–5
- ⑪ St-Hubert, Amboise, p110
- ⑫ St-Gatien, Tours pp116–17
- ⑬ La Trinité, Vendôme p123
- ⑭ Notre-Dame, Chartres pp172–5
- ⑮ St-Julien, Le Mans p166
- ⑯ Asnières-sur-Vègre p163



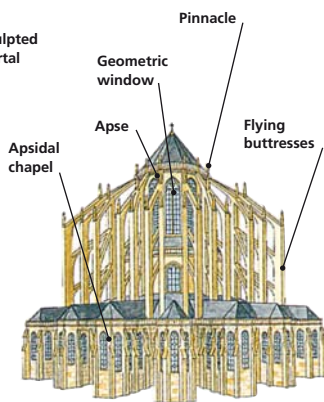
The west façade of Notre-Dame at Cunault is simply decorated. Its machicolations and lateral towers give it a fortified appearance.



The east end of St-Eusice in Selles-sur-Cher, with its three apsidal chapels, is decorated with friezes of carved figures.



The west façade of St-Gatien in Tours has a complex arrangement of paired flying buttresses, each topped by pinnacles.



The east end of St-Julien cathedral in Le Mans has a complex arrangement of paired flying buttresses, each topped by pinnacles.

TERMS USED IN THIS GUIDE

Basilica: Early church with two aisles and nave lit from above by clerestory windows.

Clerestory: A row of windows illuminating the nave from above the aisle roof.



Rose: Circular window, often stained glass.

Buttress: Mass of masonry built to support a wall.



Flying buttress: An arched support transmitting thrust of the weight downwards.

Portal: Monumental entrance to a building, often decorated.



Tympanum: Decorated space, often carved, over a door or window lintel.

Vault: Arched stone ceiling.

Transept: Two wings of a cruciform church at right angles to the nave.

Crossing: Centre of cruciform where transept crosses nave.

Lantern: Turret with windows to illuminate interior, often with cupola (domed ceiling).

Triforium: Middle storey between arcades and the clerestory.

Apse: Termination of the church, often rounded.

Ambulatory: Aisle running round east end, passing behind the sanctuary.

Arcade: Set of arches and supporting columns.

Rib vault: Vault supported by projecting ribs of stone.



Gargoyle: Carved grotesque figure, often a water spout.

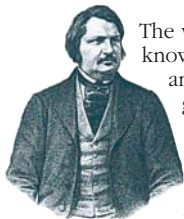
Tracery: Ornamental carved stone pattern within Gothic window.

Flamboyant Gothic: Carved stone tracery resembling flames.



Capital: Top of a column, usually carved.

Writers and Artists of the Loire Valley



Novelist
Honoré de Balzac

The valley of the River Loire is well known for its agricultural fertility, and it has also proved to be productive ground for literature, too. Over the centuries, internationally famous writers such as François Rabelais, the great lyrical poet Pierre de Ronsard and the novelists Honoré de Balzac and George Sand have lived close to the mighty river, often drawing inspiration from

their native soil. Perhaps strangely, however, the pure light that so appeals to visitors to the region does not seem to have inspired as many of the country's greatest painters, although Claude Monet spent a fruitful period in the peaceful Creuse Valley.

WRITERS

One of the earliest authors to write in the "vulgar" French tongue was born in Meung-sur-Loire in the mid-13th century. Jean Chopinel, better known as Jean de Meung, produced the second part of the widely translated and influential *Roman de la Rose*, a long, allegorical poem about courtly love. While the first half of the poem focuses delicately on two young lovers and their affair, Jean de Meung's sequel undermines the idealistic conventions of courtly love, taking a more cynical view of the world.

During the Hundred Years' War, a century and a half later, aristocratic poet Charles, Duc d'Orléans was



Illumination from the *Roman de la Rose*

imprisoned by the English for 25 years. While in prison he was able to develop his considerable poetic skills. On his return he made his court at Blois a key literary centre. He invited famous writers and poets, among them François Villon, a 15th-century poet as renowned for the skill of his writing as for his highly disreputable lifestyle. While he was in Blois, Villon won a poetry competition with his work, *"Je Meurs de Soif auprès de la Fontaine"* ("I am Dying of Thirst by the Fountain").

François Rabelais, the racy 16th-century satirist and humanist, was born in 1483 near Chinon (see pp98–9) and educated at Angers. He became famous throughout Europe upon the publication of his *Pantagruel* (1532) and *Gargantua* (1535), huge, sprawling works full of bawdy humour and learned discourse in equal measure.

Pierre de Ronsard, born near Vendôme 30 years after Rabelais, was the leading French Renaissance poet, perhaps best known for his



Writer Marcel Proust, in a late 19th-century portrait by Jacques-Emile Blanche

lyrical odes and sonnets to "Cassandre", "Hélène" and "Marie" (an Anjou peasant girl). Court poet to Charles IX and his sister Marguerite de Valois, he lived and died at St-Cosme Priory near Tours. Ronsard was also at the head of the Pléiade,

a group of seven poets who were determined to revolutionize French poetry through the study of the classics. In the same group was Joachim du Bellay, an Anjou aristocrat and keen advocate of French literature. His *Defence and Illustration of the French Language*

(1549) was a prose manifesto of the Pléiade doctrine.

Another famous native of the Loire Valley spearheaded a 17th-century intellectual revolution. Mathematician and philosopher René Descartes, born in Touraine and educated at the Jesuit college in La Flèche (see p167), developed a new method of philosophical inquiry involving the simultaneous study of all the sciences. Starting with the celebrated "I think, therefore I am," he developed the



George Sand, the 19th-century novelist

rationalist doctrine known as Cartesianism in his most famous work, the *Discourse on Method*.

France's most prolific 19th-century novelist, Honoré de Balzac, often referred to his native Touraine as his favourite province. Tours, Saumur and the Château de Saché feature as settings for some of his best-known novels, all of which are keenly observant of 19th-century French mores. The work of Balzac's contemporary, George Sand (the masculine pen name of Aurore, Baroness Dudevant), is rooted in the landscapes of her native Berry, which also inspired Alain-Fournier's magical *Le Grand Meaulnes*, a romantic vision of his childhood in the region.

The hawthorn hedges and peaceful villages near Chartres provided the unforgettable setting for the early passages of Marcel Proust's impressive sequence of novels, *Remembrance of Things Past*. At the mouth of the Loire, the city of Nantes saw the birth, in 1826, of the ever-popular Jules Verne (see pp192–3), whose pioneering works of science fiction have been enormously influential.

ARTISTS

In 1411, the three Limbourg brothers became court painters to the Duc de Berry in Bourges. He commissioned them to paint some 39 miniatures for *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. This Book of Hours was to become the jewel in the duke's fabled manuscript collection and remains one of the finest achievements of the International Gothic style. Some of these intricate illustrations depict scenes from life in the Loire Valley.

Jehan Fouquet, born in Tours in about 1420, was officially appointed royal painter in 1474. His portraits



A miniature from *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*

include the famous image of the royal mistress Agnès Sorel (see p104) posing as the Virgin Mary.

A century after Fouquet's birth, François I persuaded the elderly Leonardo da Vinci to settle in the manor house of Cloux (now called Le Clos-Lucé, see pp110–11) near the royal château of Amboise. Aged 65, Leonardo was no longer actively painting, although he is known to have made some sketches of court life which have not survived. However, he was engaged in scientific investigations and inventions, the results of which can be seen in a museum in the basement of the château.

At about the time of Leonardo's death in 1519, François Clouet was born in



Henri Rousseau, in a self-portrait that typifies his naïve style

Tours. He succeeded his father, Jean, as court painter to François I and produced a string of truly outstanding portraits. His sitters included François I himself, Elizabeth of Austria and Mary, Queen of Scots. François Clouet's style, which was typical of the French Renaissance, was perpetuated by the artists and artisans in his workshop.

Anjou's most celebrated sculptor is David d'Angers, who was born in 1788. His works include busts and medallions of many of the major historical figures of his day, including a memorial to the Marquis de Bonchamps, which can be found in the church at St-Florent-le-Vieil (see pp68–9).



François Clouet's portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots

Exactly a century later, the Impressionist painter Claude Monet spent several weeks in the village of Fresselines in the Creuse Valley, painting the river as it passed through a narrow gorge (see p147). One of these canvases, *Le Pont de Vervit*, now hangs in the Musée Marmottan in Paris.

Henri Rousseau, the quintessential naïve painter, was born in the town of Laval in 1844. Although he never left France, his best-known works are stylized depictions of lush jungles, home to all manner of wild animals. Part of the château in Laval has been converted into a Museum of Naïve Art (see p160) in honour of the artist.

Themed Tours of the Loire Valley

For those who wish to travel independently of tour companies, or who have a special interest in the region, themed tours provide an attractive alternative. Local tourist offices produce information on routes visitors can travel in order to see the best sights on a given theme – including wine, churches, châteaux, historical buildings and beautiful botanical gardens and arboretums. Illustrated brochures and tourist maps describing each route, often in languages other than French, are available, and some of the routes are signposted along the way. Tourist office staff are also able to customize a route for your particular needs.



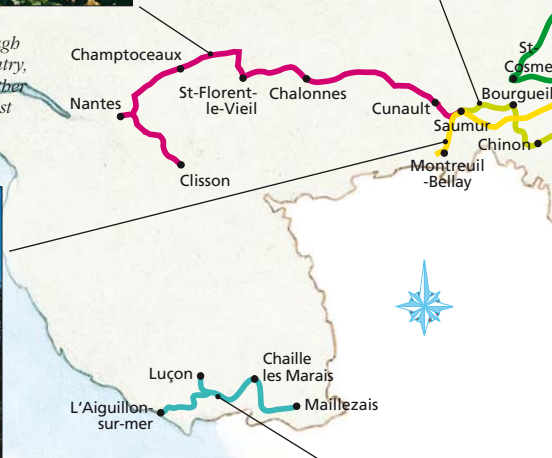
The Route Touristique du Vignoble
(Wine Route) guides the traveller through some of the region's prettiest wine country, including the Coteaux de la Loire. Further information is available from the tourist offices in Angers, Nantes and Saumur.



The Route de la Vallée des Rois takes motorists to many former royal residences, such as Azay-le-Rideau, as well as to cathedrals and churches along the part of the Loire known as the Valley of the Kings. Information is available from tourist offices along the route.



A la Recherche des Plantagenêts traces the lives of Henry Plantagenet, his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their sons (see p50). The evidence of their remarkable lives, including this fortress in Loches, can be seen throughout the region.



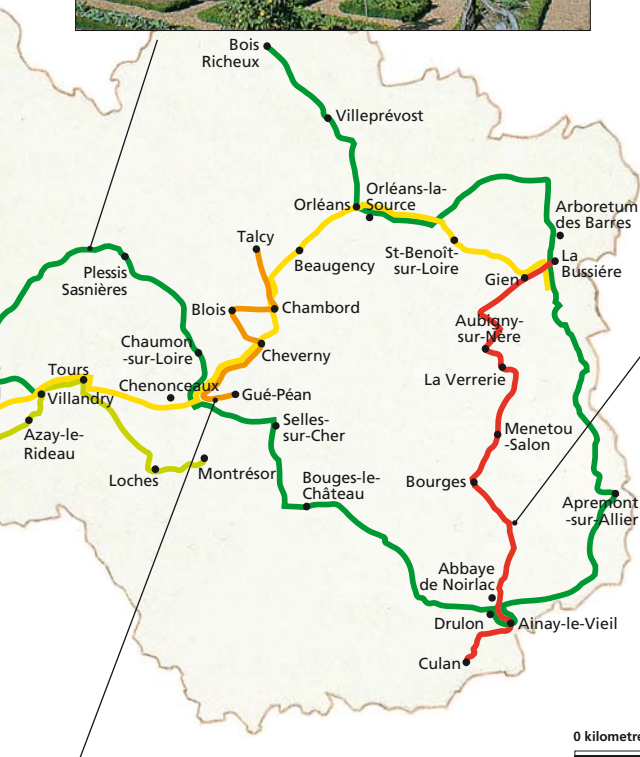
The Sentier Cyclable du Marais Poitevin is a sign-posted cycle route which takes in the attractions of the south Vendée, including the Marais Poitevin, to give a selection of the varied sights in this area. The tourist office at La-Roche-sur-Yon provides details.



The Route des Parcs et Jardins takes visitors to Villandry and many other exquisite châteaux and manor house gardens, contemporary gardens, parks and arboretums in the region. Contact the tourist office in Tours for a brochure.



The Route Jacques Cœur leads motorists through some picturesque towns as well as to memorable châteaux, including the Château de Maupas and the Palais Jacques-Cœur in Bourges (see p151), the former home of the wealthy merchant who gives the tour its name. Some of the private châteaux along the route take paying guests (see pp200–201). The tourist office in Bourges provides details of the route.



The Route François I explores the châteaux, such as Beaugard. This magnificent chateau was originally constructed as a hunting lodge for François I (see p54), who held court in Chambord and Blois during the 16th century. Ask at Blois tourist office for details.

KEY

- Sentier Cyclable du Marais Poitevin
- Route des Parcs et Jardins
- A la Recherche des Plantagenêts
- Route François I
- Route Jacques Cœur
- Route de la Vallée des Rois
- Route Touristique du Vignoble

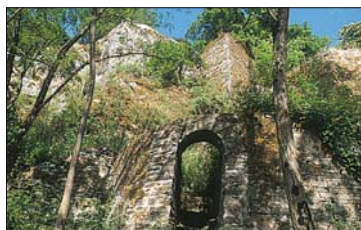
Walking in the Loire Valley

The best way to follow the “most sensual river in France,” as Flaubert called it – to appreciate the transformation of the river as it flows through the Sologne forests, carves out the Valley of the Kings, and finally rushes into the ocean – is on foot. The *Grande Randonnée 3* (GR 3) is one of the longest marked walks in France, accompanying the Loire from its source at Gerbier de Jonc to its mouth. The route occasionally strays from the river bank in order to follow the most picturesque paths. For walks lasting a few hours, or several days, ramblers can follow a part of the *Grande Randonnée* or try the region’s many shorter, often circular, routes. A Topo-Guide (see p224) is a useful companion for detailed information about your walk.

KEY

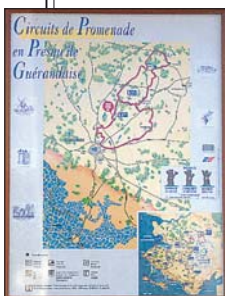
- Recommended walk
- Grande Randonnée de Pays
- Grande Randonnée

In the charming Alpes Mancelles, on the edge of the Parc Régional Normandie-Maine, there is a variety of walks in the valleys of the Sarthe, the Mayenne and the Orne. (IGN 1618 OT)

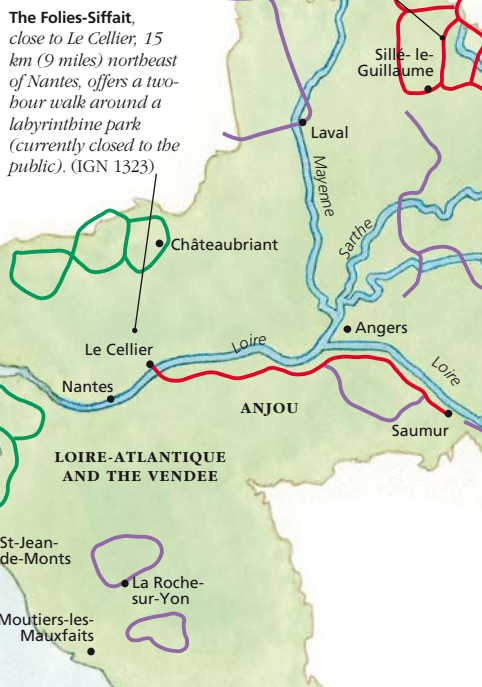


The Folies-Siffait, close to Le Cellier, 15 km (9 miles) northeast of Nantes, offers a two-hour walk around a labyrinthine park (currently closed to the public). (IGN 1323)

0 kilometres 50
0 miles 50



The Parc Naturel Régional de Brière (see p180) is criss-crossed by paths that take walkers through the reeds where thousands of birds build their nests. (IGN 83034)



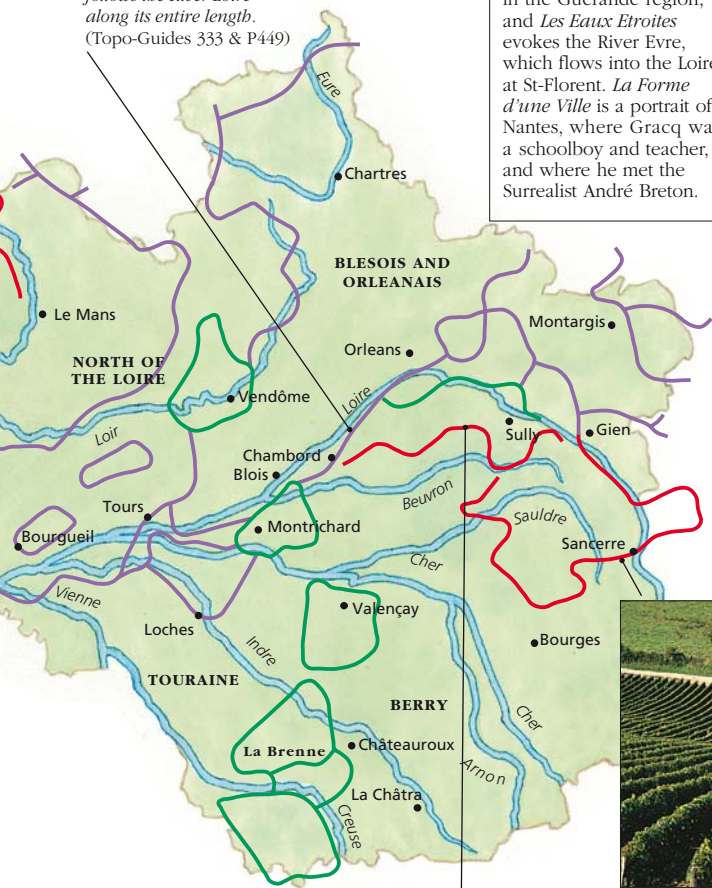
ROUTE MARKERS

All the walking routes are marked with symbols painted onto trees or rocks along the paths. The different colours of the symbols indicate which kind of route you are taking. A red and white mark denotes a *Grande Randonnée* (GR) route, yellow and red are used for a regional route (*Grande Randonnée de Pays*), and local routes (*Promenade et Randonnée*) are marked in a single colour (usually yellow).

	Grande Randonnée	Grande Randonnée de Pays	Promenade et Randonnée
Straight on			
Change direction			
Wrong way			

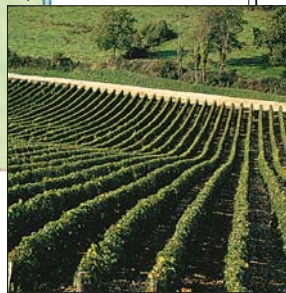
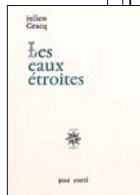


The Grande Randonnée 3
follows the River Loire
along its entire length.
(Topo-Guides 333 & P449)



GRACQ, A WALKING WRITER

For French ramblers, it is difficult to walk beside the River Loire without thinking of Julien Gracq. One of the most famous contemporary French writers, Gracq lives in St-Florent-le-Vieil (see p68), a village perched on the south bank of the river between Angers and Nantes. Many of his books entice the reader to explore the Loire Valley on foot. *La Presqu'île* is set in the Guérande region, and *Les Eaux Etroites* evokes the River Evre, which flows into the Loire at St-Florent. *La Forme d'une Ville* is a portrait of Nantes, where Gracq was a schoolboy and teacher, and where he met the Surrealist André Breton.



The Sancerrois (see p155) is crossed by 30 short walks (Petites Randonnées) of between 4 and 26 km (2.5–16 miles) passing through vineyards that produce excellent white wine. A booklet is available from local tourist offices.



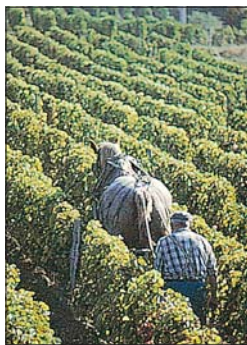
The Sologne is on the route of the GR 3C, a variation of the GR 3. The path leaves the Loire between Gien and Chambord and takes walkers on a five-day journey through this forest (see p141). For shorter walks, see the Topo-Guide P411.

Winemaking and Vineyards



Caricature of a wine maker in "costume"

The importance of wine to life in the Loire Valley is immediately apparent. Fields of vines stretch along both banks of the river, and roadsides are lined with signs offering *dégustations*, or wine tastings (see p212). Stretching 300 km (186 miles) from Nantes to Pouilly-sur-Loire, the Loire Valley is the third largest wine-producing area by volume in France and offers an unprecedented range of wine styles. The white Sancerres have an excellent reputation (see p155), as do some of the rosé wines of Anjou, the sweet and sparkling Vouvrays, the full-bodied reds of Chinon and Bourgueil, and the superb, dry *méthode champenoise* wines of Saumur. There are many more modest wines available, including Muscadet and its younger cousin Gros Plant, which are best served chilled.



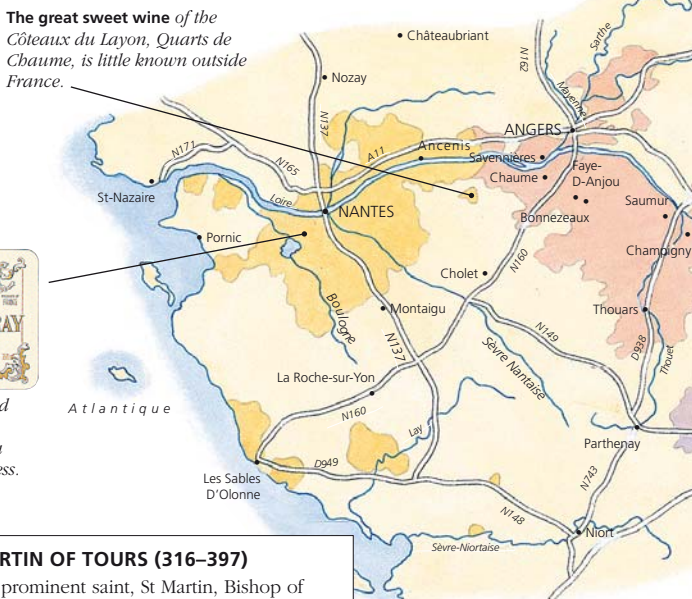
Traditional vineyard cultivation



The great sweet wine of the Côteaux du Layon, Quarts de Chaume, is little known outside France.



Muscadet designated sur lie has greater flavour because of a special ageing process.



ST MARTIN OF TOURS (316–397)

The Loire's most prominent saint, St Martin, Bishop of Tours, was said to have brought three vines from his native Hungary and planted them in Touraine. But his donkey may have made a greater contribution when it stripped the leaves off vines near to where it had been tethered. Those vines later proved to be the most productive in the vineyard, and the now standard practice of pruning vines was born.



St Martin on his donkey

KEY

- Pays Nantais
- Anjou-Saumur
- Haut-Poitou
- Touraine
- Central Vineyards

0 kilometres 15

0 miles 15

KEY FACTS ABOUT LOIRE WINES

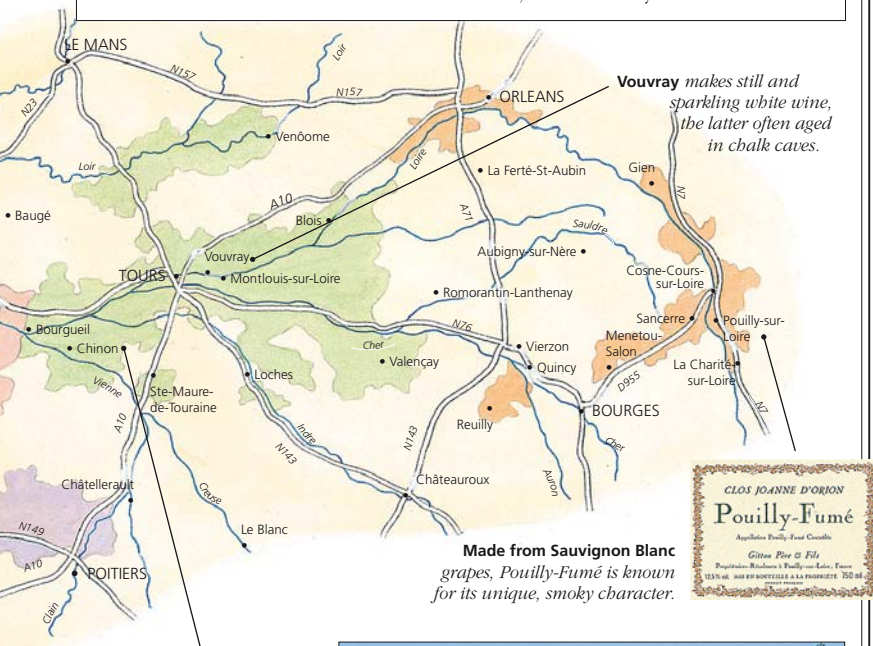
**Grape Varieties**

The Muscadet grape makes simple, dry whites. The Sauvignon Blanc produces gooseberryish, flinty dry whites. Chenin Blanc is used for the dry and medium Anjou, Vouvray, Savennières and Saumur, and the famous sweet whites, Vouvray, Quarts de Chaume and Bonnezeaux. Summery reds are made from the Gamay and the Cabernet Franc.

**Good Producers (west to east)**

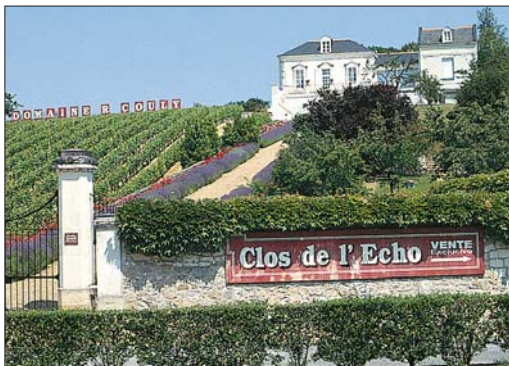
Muscadet: Château de la Bretesche, Marquis de Goulaine, Château de Chasseloir. **Anjou (red):** Domaine de Ste-Anne. **Anjou (rosé):** Robert Lecomte-Girault. **Anjou (dry white):** Domaine Richou. **Saumur (sparkling):** Bouvet-Ladunay, Ackerman-Laurance, Gratién & Meyer. **Saumur (red):** Château de Villeneuve. **Saumur (white):** Domaine des Nerleux,

Château de St-Florent. **Bourgueil (red):** Clos du Vigneau. **Chinon (red):** Domaine René Couly, Clos de la Dioterie. **Touraine (white):** Domaine Joel Delaunay. **Vouvray:** Clos du Bourg, Le Haut-Lieu, Chevreau-Vigneau, Alain Ferraud, Sylvain Gaudron. **Sancerre:** Domaine de St-Pierre, Domaine Paul Prieur. **Crémant de Loire (sparkling white):** Château de Midouin, Perry de Maleyrand.



Couly-Dutheil's Clos de l'Echo is a beautiful, bright ruby wine made from Cabernet Franc grapes. The AOC wines of Chinon have an attractive, spicy aroma and age well.

The Clos de l'Echo vineyard

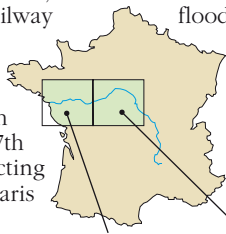




A VIEW OF THE RIVER LOIRE

A natural highway to the centre of France, the Loire was travelled from the earliest days. The remains of prehistoric canoes have been found along the river; later evidence shows that Celtic tribes and the Romans used the river extensively as a major trade route. In fact, until the development of the railway network during the 19th century, the river was a key transportation route.

The growth of the French canal network from the 17th to 19th centuries, connecting the port of Nantes with Paris and the north, enhanced the Loire's importance.



See pages 34-5

The River Loire can be unpredictable and sometimes dangerous, and it was one of the first rivers that man tried to control. There is evidence that embankments were being built as early as the 12th century – and work continues – but the river remains essentially wild and is still subject to

floods, freezes, shifting sands and dangerous currents. Today, the river is no longer used for commerce, except by tour boats giving visitors a unique view of the surrounding landscape. This makes an exploration of the River Loire all the more pleasant.

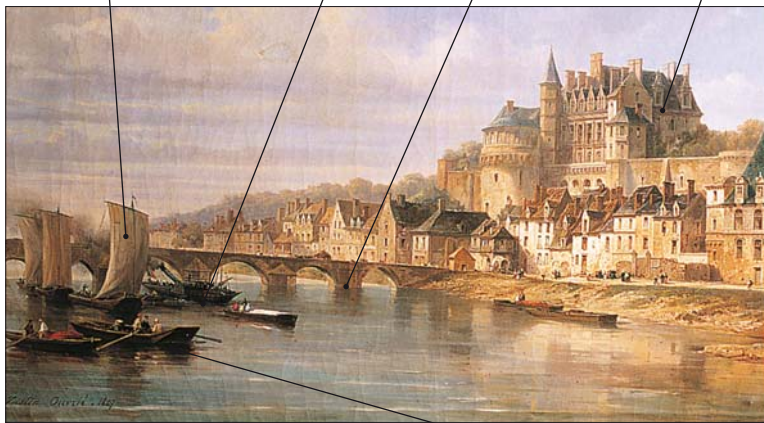
See pages 36-7

Sailing boats, with their typical square sails, often travelled in groups of three or more.

Steamers would use powerful winches to dip their smoke-stacks, enabling them to pass under low bridges.

Amboise's bridge traverses the river and the Ile St-Jean.

Château d'Amboise is set on a promontory above the river, safe from possible flooding.



VUE D'AMBOISE

This painting by Justin Ouvrié, now kept in the vaults of the Musée de la Poste in Paris, was painted in 1847. The bustling river scene, which includes several types of vessel, gives an indication of the importance of the River Loire to life and trade in the region, before the railways came to dominate transportation later in the century.



Barges, known in French as *cbalands*, did not always have sails – sometimes they were rowed.

Everyday objects were often decorated with river scenes, such as this 19th-century plate from the Musée de la Marine de Loire in Châteauneuf-sur-Loire.

River View: St-Nazaire to Montsoreau



A pleasure barge on the River Loire

As the river Loire leaves Touraine and heads through Anjou and the Loire Atlantique, it widens and flows faster, as though rushing towards the Atlantic Ocean. Its waters are also swelled by many tributaries. Some flow alongside, creating a multitude of islands big and small; other tributaries flow north and south through the surrounding countryside. This land is rich in ancient monuments, including the Bagneux dolmen, the largest Neolithic construction of its kind, as well as fortresses built during the Middle Ages.



Champtoceaux

The village of Champtoceaux, on a cliff 80 m (260 ft) above the river, offers panoramic views. A private Renaissance chateau now occupies the lower part of the bluff, where a medieval citadel once stood.



St-Nazaire

At the mouth of the River Loire, where it flows into the Atlantic Ocean, St-Nazaire (see p190) is the site of a major French industrial zone. Its graceful bridge is the westernmost river crossing.



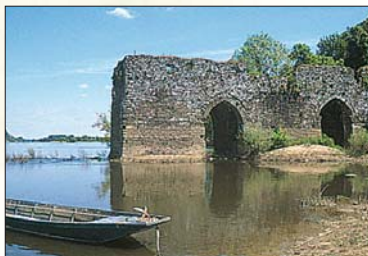
Nantes' Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul is Gothic style.

Ancenis



Nantes

Nantes was a prosperous port during the 18th and 19th centuries (see pp 190–193), the meeting point between the ocean and the inland river transportation channels.



Pége Fortifié du Cul-du-Moulin

This toll station was one of many constructed in the 13th century to collect revenue from passing vessels. This is one of the few remaining river toll stations in France.

0 kilometres

20

0 miles

20

THE BRIDGES OF THE LOIRE

There have long been bridges across the River Loire – there was one at Orléans as early as AD 52, which was later destroyed by Julius Caesar's army. Now, with so many options for places to cross the river, it is difficult to imagine what it was like during the Middle Ages, when there were only five, or during the 15th century, when there were just 13. The bridges crossing the river today tell the story not only of the development of bridge building, but also of the region itself, its history and relationships.



St-Nazaire

At 3,356 m (11,000 ft), St-Nazaire is the longest bridge in France. The central, suspended section is 404 m (1,300 ft) long. It opened for traffic in 1975. Before then, the estuary was crossed by ferry, and the nearest bridge was at Nantes.



St-Florent

Once the church of a Benedictine monastery, the abbey on the promontory was the site of dramatic events during the Vendée Uprising (see p68). More than 40,000 Royalist troops and their supporters crossed the river here.



Montsoreau

Montsoreau, at the confluence of the Loire and Vienne rivers, has a 15th-century turreted château (see p85).



Angers

The Apocalypse Tapestries (see pp76-7), masterpieces of the 14th century, are displayed in the Château d'Angers.

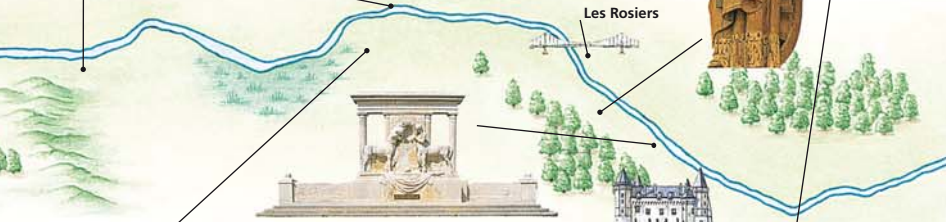
The Château d'Angers,

with its massive towers and curtain walls, is on the River Maine, north of the Loire.



Cunault

The impressive Romanesque church in Cunault (see p79) is home to this painted 15th-century statue of St Catherine.



Saumur

Saumur is famous for its cavalry school, whose fallen cadets are honoured by this memorial.

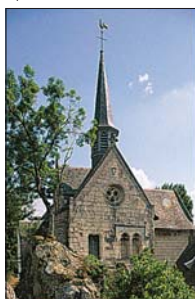


Les Rosiers



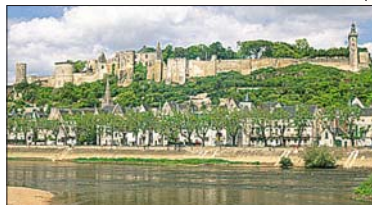
The Château de Saumur

(see p82) rises above the town like a fairytale castle.



Ile Bébuard

This island (see p69) was once a pilgrimage site for sailors, who prayed to a sea goddess to help them navigate the sometimes treacherous waters of the River Loire. The present church was built by Louis XI who had nearly drowned here.



Cbinon

Above the River Vienne, Cbinon (see pp98-100) was home to Henry Plantagenet in the 12th century.



Ancenis

The suspension bridge at Ancenis opened in 1953, replacing one destroyed in 1940. As the town is at the border of Brittany and Anjou, two coats of arms adorn either end of the bridge, one with the three lilies of Anjou and one with the ermine of Brittany.



Les Rosiers

The bridge at Les Rosiers is one of the two that cross the Loire at this point. The river is particularly wide here and has an island in the middle. The island is connected to the banks at the towns of Les Rosiers and Gennes by two bridges.

River View: Tours to Nevers



Stained glass
in Gien

This is truly the royal Loire Valley. As the river flows through the regions of Touraine, Blésois and Orléanais, it passes beside many Renaissance châteaux. Some, like Chaumont, Amboise and Gien, show their fortress-like exteriors to the river, often concealing courtyard gardens and highly decorated façades. Others, like Sully, glory in their luxury. Throughout Touraine, vineyards gently slope towards the river, while in the west, the lands bordering the river are taken up by the forests that were once the hunting grounds of kings and princes.



Langeais

In the town of Langeais, (see p92) high above the river, there is a massive 15th-century château, still furnished in keeping with its period.

Beaugency's massive keep (see p136) dates from the 10th century.



Beaugency



Blois

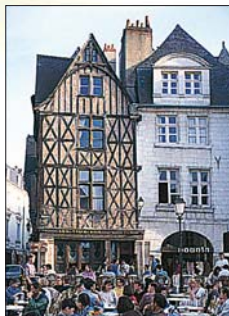
On the north bank of the Loire, Blois (see pp124-7) was the seat of the counts of Blois, and then the residence of François I, whose salamander emblem decorates one fireplace.

Château d'Amboise

(see p110) is a 15th-century château, built by Charles VIII.

Pagode de Chanteloup

All that remains of a once-lovely château, this strange pagoda (see p111) is 44 m (145 ft) tall.



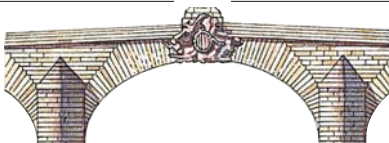
Tours

In the heart of the Loire Valley region, Tours (see pp112-17) was always a significant crossing point on the river. The lively place Plumereau, lined with 15th-century buildings, is in the Old Town.



Château de Chaumont

The great fortress of Chaumont (see p128) is softened by Renaissance touches and offers impressive views from its terrace.

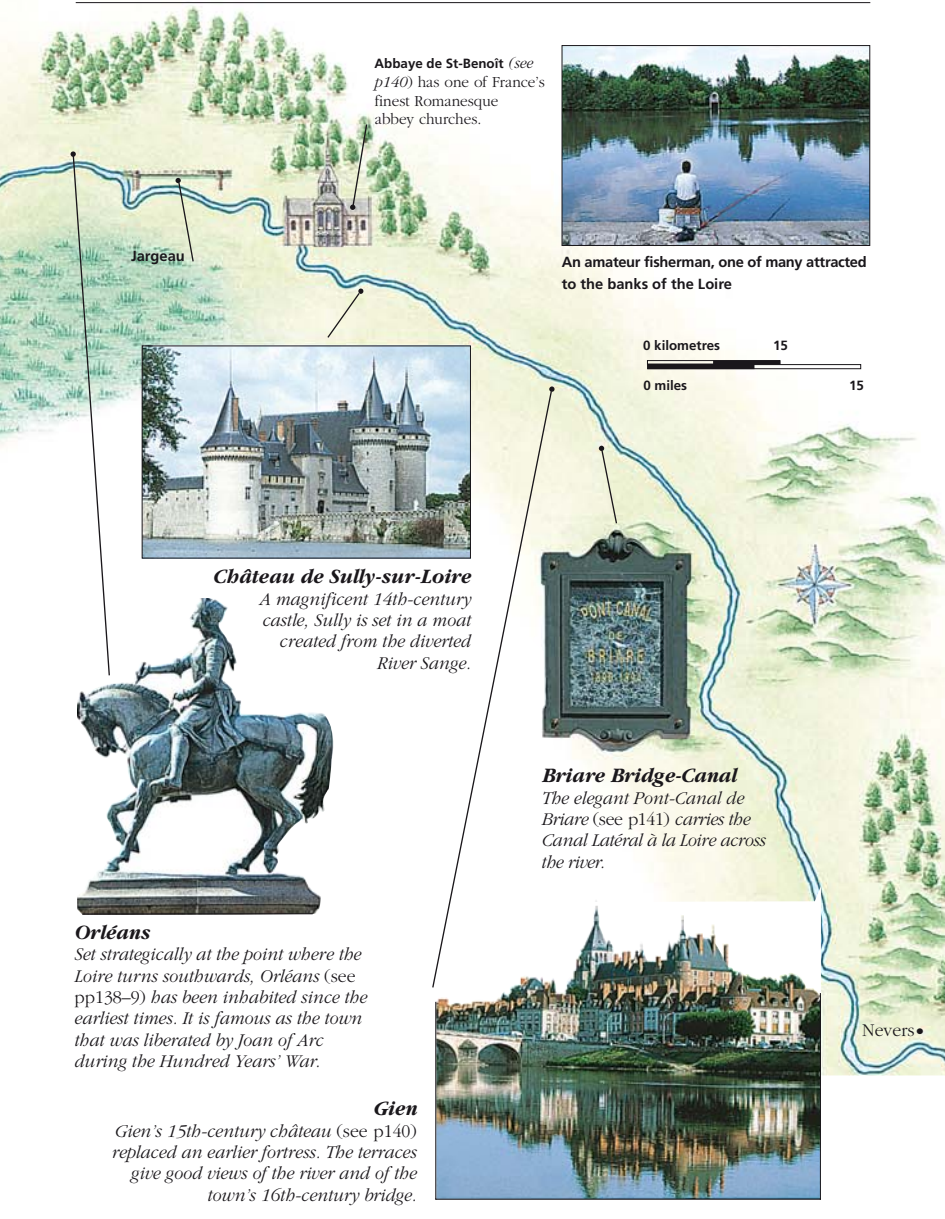


Tours

When Tours' original 18th-century bridge was built, the rue Nationale, which links it to the centre of the city, became the major thoroughfare, in place of the road between the cathedral and the Old Town.

Blois

The bridge at Blois was built between 1716 and 1724, replacing a medieval bridge destroyed when a ship crashed into it. It was built to a very high standard, enabling it to survive floods and freezes.



Beaugency

Beaugency's bridge is built in several different styles, because sections of the original 12th-century wooden structure were gradually replaced with stone. The earliest date from the 14th century.



Jargeau

The original bridge was replaced by a wooden suspension bridge in the 19th century. A steel bridge, built in the 1920s, was hit in World War II. The current bridge dates from 1988.

THE LOIRE VALLEY THROUGH THE YEAR

Spring and early summer are often particularly beautiful in the regions bordering the River Loire. But it should not be forgotten that this is the “Garden of France”, and that successful gardens need plentiful watering in the main growing season, so be prepared for showery days. In the sultry, humid heat of July and early August, the Loire is usually reduced to a modest trickle between glistening sand banks. The châteaux can be very crowded in the summer. Perhaps the most pleasant season is



Spring
asparagus

autumn, when forests gleam red and gold in the mild sunshine, the restaurants serve succulent local game and wild mushrooms, and the grape harvest is celebrated in towns and villages with many colourful festivals. Music festivals are also very popular in the region.

Concerts are staged all year round at the Abbaye de Fontevraud (see pp86–7), and Amboise (see p110) holds its Summer Organ Festival between June and August. For more information about any of these festivals, contact the local tourist office (see p231).

SPRING

March sees the reopening of many châteaux after their winter closure, often on the Palm Sunday weekend that marks the beginning of the influx of visitors from the rest of France and abroad. The spring flowers in the meadows, the flowing waters of the Loire and other rivers, swollen by winter rains, and the spring migrations of birds are particularly appreciated by nature lovers.

MARCH

Foire à l'Andouillette (weekend before Easter), Athée-sur-Cher (nr Chenonceau). This is one of many celebrations of local produce, in this case chitterling sausages.
Foire aux Vins (1bird weekend), Bourgueil (nr Chinon).

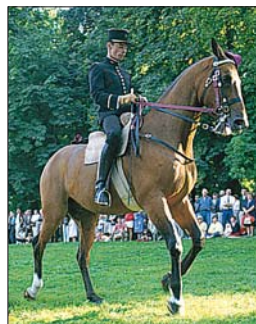
Wine fairs bring together many local producers to display their latest vintages, but drinking as well as tasting is the order of the day.

APRIL

Le Printemps de Bourges (1bird week), Bourges (pp150–51). This contemporary music festival starts off the long concert season in this music-loving region.

MAY

Fête de Jeanne d'Arc (week of 8 May), Orléans (pp138–9). One of France's oldest fêtes, begun in 1435 to celebrate the routing of the English in 1429, this festival takes the form of a huge, colourful costume pageant.
Concours Complet International (1bird weekend), Saumur (pp80–83). This



Horse and rider from Saumur's Cadre Noir display team

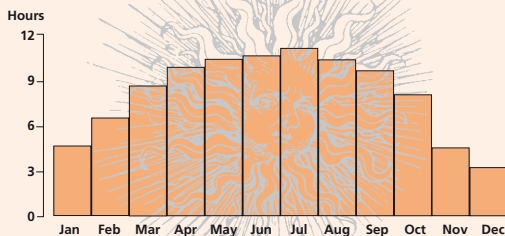
international horse-riding competition takes place at the famous Cadre Noir riding school, which also hosts tattoo and equestrian displays from April until September.
Jour de Loire (last weekend), Loiret, Anjou and Touraine. This wide-reaching festival illustrates and celebrates all aspects of life lived alongside the River Loire.

Le Printemps des Arts (May and Jun), Nantes (pp190–93) and surrounding area. A Baroque dance, theatre and music festival, with performances held in churches and historic buildings in Nantes, Angers and other towns in the western Loire.
Le Festival International des Jardins de Chaumont-sur-Loire (May–mid-Oct). A celebration of the region's horticultural magnificence.



Farm workers in the fields around Bourgueil

AVERAGE DAILY HOURS OF SUNSHINE



Sunshine Chart

The summer months are generally hot, with the hottest period in July. On the Atlantic coast, cool sea breezes often bring welcome relief from the heat but do not mean that sun-bathers are less likely to burn. In the spring and autumn, river areas can be misty in the mornings.

SUMMER

France's traditional mid-summer celebrations take place on or around the Feast of John the Baptist on 24 June, with fireworks, bonfires, live music and dancing. Towards the end of the month, most of the famous *son et lumière* (see pp42-3) performances begin again, although the long, light evenings of June and July are the peak time for these special events. Many of the small towns and villages hold local fêtes in July and the first half of August, the height of the French tourist season.

JUNE

Les 24 Heures du Mans (second or third weekend), Le Mans (pp164-7). One of France's main events, this international 24-hour car race attracts enormous crowds.

Festival d'Anjou (mid-Jun-mid-Jul). This theatre festival is held in historic sites throughout the *département*.

Foire aux Escargots (last weekend), Loché-sur-Indrois (nr Azay-le-Rideau). Snails are served along with local wines in an open-air restaurant.

Fêtes Musicales en Touraine (last weekend; first weekend in Jul), Tours (pp112-17). Started in 1964, this international festival of chamber music is held in a superb medieval tithe barn.

JULY

Carnaval de Cholet (one week in Jul), Cholet (p69). Cholet's grand carnival



The beach at the popular Atlantic resort, Les Sables-d'Olonne

culminates in a fabulous night-time parade of multicoloured floats.

Bastille Day (14 Jul).

The celebrations for the *Fête Nationale*, commemorating the Storming of the Bastille in 1789, are the high point of the year in many small communities, where visitors can join in the dancing and wine-quaffing, and enjoy the often-impressive firework displays.

Tous sur le Pont, (first two weeks), Blois. An open-air celebration of classical and jazz music and theatre culminating in a firework display and dancing on the bridge.

Sardinantes (second or third Sat), Nantes. Savour a plate of grilled sardines

accompanied by Celtic music and dancing on the quay in old Nantes. A typical local festival.

Foire à l'Ail et au Basilic

(26 Jul), Tours. The headily scented garlic and basil fair is held every year on the Feast of St Anne (p117).

Festival International d'Orgue (Sun in Jul and Aug), Chartres Cathedral (pp171-5). Renowned organists from all over the world descend on Chartres to participate in this prestigious organ festival.

AUGUST

Marché Médiéval (first weekend), Chinon (pp98-100). A lively market takes over the whole of the little town, with stallholders dressed in period costume and medieval dishes served in outside taverns.

Foire aux Vins du Vouvray (around 15 Aug), Vouvray. The Feast of the Assumption is marked by numerous local festivities, with wine events predominating.

Foire aux Sorcières (first Sun), Bué (nr Sancerre).

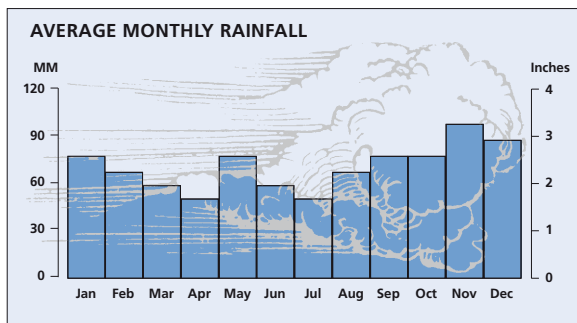
The Berry is often said to be a centre of witchcraft and sorcery. On this occasion, children dressed as witches or ghosts parade through the village to a nearby field where crowds play games and watch folk groups performing.

Festival de Sablé (last weekend), Sablé-sur-Sarthe (p162). Over



Folk dancers at a festival

a period of five days, musicians perform in churches and manor houses around Sablé.



Rainfall Chart

Spring and autumn are the wettest times, with the amount of rainfall occasionally causing the River Loire and its many tributaries to break their banks. As you head inland from the coast, precipitation tends to increase. During the summer, rains and violent storms are common at night.

AUTUMN

The golden days of autumn attract large numbers of Parisians to the region for shooting weekends, especially to the forested eastern areas. This is also the season for the *vendanges*, or grape harvest, and the events and festivities associated with it, and for fairs celebrating the new season's produce.

SEPTEMBER

Les Accroche-Coeurs (*se ond week*), Angers (*pp72-3*).

During the course of three or four days, the streets of Angers are alive with open-air theatre, dance, circus, concerts and all manner of performance arts.

Foire aux Melons (*se ond Fri*), Bléré. The fields around Bléré near Chenonceau are bright with golden and orange melons in autumn.

Fête du Pain (*se ond Sat*), Montreuil-en-Touraine (nr Amboise). The humble bread

loaf, often decorated with nuts and leaves to celebrate the arrival of autumn, becomes a work of art in the skilful hands of local bakers.

Journées du Patrimoine (*third weekend*). For one weekend a year, châteaux and other historic buildings that are usually closed to the public can be visited, and concerts, exhibitions and other cultural events are staged.

Foire aux Rillons (*29 Sep*), St-Michel-sur-Loire (nr Langeais). The Feast of St Michael is celebrated with a festival devoted to a delicacy of Touraine (*see p210*).

OCTOBER

Celtomania (*first three weeks*), Nantes. This lively celebration of Celtic culture includes music and theatre performances.

Foire aux Pommes (*second weekend*), Le Petit-Pressigny (nr Le Grand-Pressigny).

Apple orchards yield their fruit this month, filling the



High-quality local produce on sale at the Saturday market in Saumur

markets with a wide variety of apples. Azay-le-Rideau holds its own Apple Fair during the last weekend of October.

Foire à la Bernache (*last Sun Oct or 1st Sun Nov*), Reugny (nr Tours). Although it may be an acquired taste, the *bernache* (unfermented new wine) is very popular with the locals.

Foire aux Marrons (*last Tue*), Bourgueil (nr Chinon). Chestnuts are the traditional accompaniment to new wine, and for this reason they feature in many guises here. **Musiques d'Automne** (*mid-Sep-mid-Oct*), Chinon. Six classical music concerts take place at weekends in churches and châteaux in and around Chinon.

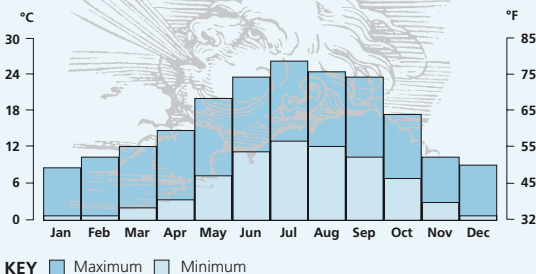
NOVEMBER

Marché de Noël (*last weekend*), Château de Brissac (*p78*). The Christmas market in the château, featuring local artisans and seasonal produce, marks the beginning of the Christmas season.



Wine-tasting at Kerhinet in La Grande Brière

AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURE



Temperature Chart

It is rare for winter temperatures to fall below freezing in the Loire Valley. In the west, the sea moderates the climate, keeping it mild. Elsewhere, summer temperatures can reach over 30° C (86° F) in the middle of the day, but the evenings are usually cooler and perfect for eating outside on terraces by the river.

WINTER

Winter is the quiet season in the Loire Valley, when a damp chill rather than a frosty cold sets in, and many of the châteaux are closed. A few Christmas markets are held, and a film festival, but in general this is a time when local people prefer the pleasures of home.

DECEMBER

Festival du Film (*first week*), Vendôme (pp122–3). This celebration of short, animated and experimental films is held at the Minotaure cultural centre. In addition to the competition, there are video installations, exhibitions, debates and retrospectives.

Fête de la St-Nicolas (*first weekend*), St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil (nr Chinon). One of many Christmas fairs held throughout the region, selling toys and festive decorations.

Foire de Noël (*first weekend*), Richelieu (p102–3). This traditional Christmas market



An old windmill in the Anjou countryside

sells gifts, decorations and seasonal food.

JANUARY

La Folle Journée (*last week*), Nantes and various other towns around the region. As many as 400 classical music concerts take place in 12 different towns, all focusing on a theme that changes every year.



A concert at the Abbaye de Fontevraud

FEBRUARY

Fêtes des Vins d'Anjou (*last weekend*), Chalonnes-sur-Loire. The winter period is enlivened with wine fairs, such as this gathering of producers of the Saumur and Anjou appellations.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day

(1 Jan)

Easter Monday

Ascension (sixth Thursday after Easter)

Labour Day

(1 May)

VE Day

(8 May)

Bastille Day

(14 Jul)

Feast of the Assumption

(15 Aug)

All Saints' Day

(1 Nov)

Remembrance Day

(11 Nov)

Christmas Day

(25 Dec)

Son et Lumière in the Loire



Actor at Amboise

The Loire Valley was the birthplace of son et lumière (literally “sound and light”) shows, and some of the world’s finest examples can be found here. The first performances, staged at Chambord in 1952, combined lighting effects and a soundtrack to emphasize the beauty of the building and to conjure up important historical figures. Today many of the shows use lasers and dramatic fireworks, as well as a cast of hundreds (often amateur actors drawn from the local community), to create a spectacular pageant. The following list includes the main regular shows, but it is worth keeping an eye open for posters advertising one-off events. Performance times may vary.



Lighting effects bringing drama to the Château d'Azay-le-Rideau

TOURAINE

Amboise At the Court of King François (1½ hours). **Tel** 02 47 57 14 47. late Jun–Jul: 10:30pm Wed, Sat; Aug: 10pm Wed, Sat. book in advance. **Translations** Eng. www.renaissance-amboise.com

This is a celebration of the life of François I, held at his favourite royal château (see pp110). The show is enacted by local residents and recreates the court, with its sumptuous costumes, thrilling hunts, pleasure gardens and elaborate festivities.

Azay-le-Rideau Dreams & Lights (45 mins). **Tel** 02 47 45 42 04. Jul & Aug: 9:45pm nightly; 1–16 Sep: 9pm Fri & Sat.

During this fascinating promenade production, all the spectators walk around the grounds of this elegant château (see pp96–7), as they observe a succession of stage, sound and lighting effects.

Chenonceau Night-time

Promenade (1½ hours). **Tel** 02 47 23 90 07. Jun: 9:30–11pm Sat & Sun; Jul & Aug: 9:30–11pm nightly.

The son et lumière production at this beautiful royal residence (see pp106–9) takes the form of a play of light and shadow orchestrated by Pierre Bideau, the designer of the Eiffel Tower illuminations. The walk leads through the gardens designed by Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Médicis. Corelli’s music adds to the romantic atmosphere.



Faces from the past projected onto the walls of Château de Blois

Loches

Le Sablier Magique

(1 hour 40 mins).

Tel 02 47 91 82 82.

first three weeks in Aug:

10pm Wed, Fri, Sat.

Translations Eng, Ger, Spa.

Staged in various locations in the château grounds (see pp104), sixty actors recount an imaginary tale in which time is suspended, vividly enhanced by highly creative light effects.

BLEÛSOIS AND ORLÉANAIS

Blois The Story of Blois (45

mins). **Tel** 02 54 90 33 32. 15

Apr–31 May: 10pm nightly; Jun &

Jul: 10:30pm nightly; Aug: 10pm

nightly; 1–24 Sep: 9:30pm nightly.

Translations Eng, Ger, Ital, Spa. English performance on Wed.

Images of key moments in the history of the château (see pp126–7) are projected onto its façade. Included are the visit of Joan of Arc in 1429, the poetry contest between Charles of Orléans and François Villon, and the assassination of the Duc de Guise. Watch the show from the château’s courtyard.

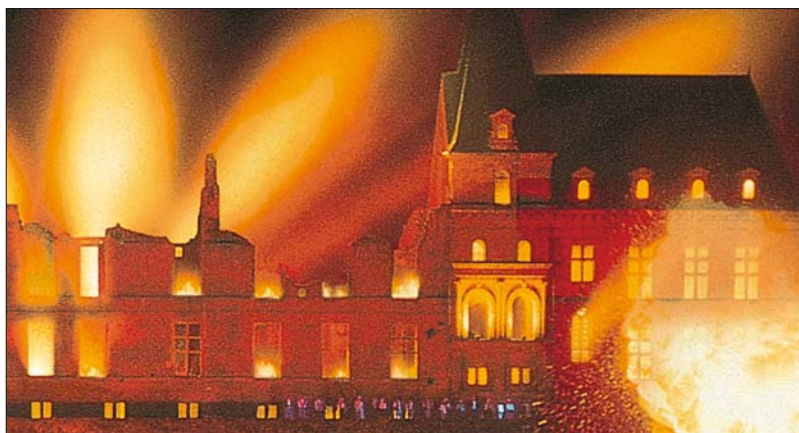
Cléry-Saint-André Jeanne d'Arc et la Légende du Fleuve

(1¾ hours). **Tel** 02 38 45 94 06.

last 3 w/ends Jul: 10:30pm.

www.cleryraconte.com

Some 150 actors in period costume recreate Joan of Arc’s passage along the Loire, adding a touch of fantasy with a “river spirit” that guides her to victory at Orléans. The drama takes place in a specially created setting near the Basilique Cléry. On several nights medieval feasts are served.



Fireworks and lighting effects illuminate the château of Puy-du-Fou

BERRY

Valençay Tel ☎ 02 54 00 04

42. **Le Chasseur Maudit** (90 mins)

☐ 10 performances in first three weeks of Aug: 9.30pm. 📖

La Visite aux Chandelles

☐ mid-Jun–Aug: once a week. 📖

Le Chasseur Maudit is a tale of magic and witchcraft set in the gardens of Valençay; the story changes every two to three years. For the *Visite aux Chandelles*, the castle and the gardens are illuminated at nightfall by more than 2,000 candles.

Aubigny-sur-Nère

Different Franco-Scottish themes

(90 mins). Tel 02 48 81 50 07.

☐ second and third weekend in Jul: 9.30pm. 📖 book in advance.

Centuries of proud association with the Stuart clan, including a time in the 18th century when Jacobite exiles made their home at Aubigny (see p154), are reflected in this Franco-Scot celebration. The main event takes place over the course of four days around 14 July, comprising a historical re-enactment, plus costume parades, music and dance. On the Saturday the spectacle is complemented by a feast in the gardens of the château, while on the Sunday there is a medieval market. The 14th of July is marked with a big firework display.

LOIRE ATLANTIQUE AND THE VENDEE

Le Puy-du-Fou

Cinésécénie (100 mins)

Tel 02 51 64 11 11.

☐ Jun & Jul: 10:30pm Fri & Sat;

Aug–early Sep: 10pm Fri & Sat.

Arrive one hour earlier. 📖 book in advance. **Translation** Eng.

www.puydufou.com

The Château du Puy-du-Fou (see p188) hosts the *Cinésécénie*, which bills itself as the world's largest permanent son et lumière spectacle. More than 1,000 actors, 250 horses, countless volunteers and various spectacular high-tech effects combine to trace the turbulent history of the Vendée from the Middle Ages to the end of World War II.

THE MAGICIAN OF THE NIGHT

The master of the modern son et lumière in France is Jean-Claude Baudoin, who is also known as “*le magicien de la nuit*”. Since 1966 he has created the sets for more than 150 musical productions, held at the châteaux of Blois, Loches Chambord and Valençay, as well as in St-Aignan-sur-Cher, Les Sables d’Olonne and Chartres.

Producer
Jean-Claude
Baudoin



The history of the Vendée re-enacted in the Cinésécénie at Le Puy-du-Fou



THE HISTORY OF THE LOIRE VALLEY

The Loire's central role in French history is splendidly displayed in the breadth of its architectural styles, ranging from megalithic structures to royal and ducal châteaux.

Imposing prehistoric monuments testify to the existence of thriving Neolithic cultures as early as the third millennium BC. By the 1st century BC, the conquering Romans found sophisticated Celtic communities already established. Later, as Christianity spread, the ancient Celtic towns at Angers, Bourges, Chartres, Orléans and Tours became well known as centres of learning, and they remain vibrant cultural centres today.

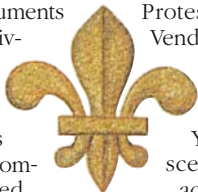
A long period of territorial conflict began in the 9th century, first among local warlords and later between France and England, when Henry Plantagenet, count of Anjou and duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, inherited the English crown in 1154. Major battles between the two countries were

fought in the region during the Hundred Years' War. The Loire also saw bloodshed during the fierce 16th-century Wars of Religion, which took place between the Catholics and the

Protestant Huguenots. Later, the Vendée Uprising of 1793 was the most serious civil threat to the French republic after the 1789 Revolution.

Yet the Loire was also the scene of outstanding cultural achievements and the home of many French kings. By the 17th century, France's political focus had shifted to Paris, although the River Loire remained a key transportation route until the advent of the railway in the late 19th century.

In the 20th century, the impressive architectural evidence of this rich history has led to the growth of the Loire's tourist industry. This balances with a diverse, well-established industrial base and thriving agriculture to make the valley one of the most economically stable regions of France.



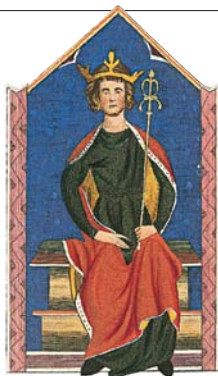
Fleur-de-lys, the royal emblem



16th-century views of Tours, with its cathedral, and Angers, with quarries of ardoise slate

Rulers of the Loire

In the course of the Loire's history, the power of the local nobility often rivalled that of the French throne. The dukedoms of Anjou and Blois were established when Charlemagne's territory was divided among his sons upon his death in 814. Henry Plantagenet, count of Anjou, duke of Normandy and king of England, could trace his lineage to Charlemagne. The French monarchy did not consolidate its authority until Charles VII moved from the Loire back to Paris in 1436. Another local family, the royal house of Orléans, saw two of its sons become kings.



1151–89 *Henry Plantagenet*

KEY

French monarchs

Notable members of local dynasties

	447–58 Merovich	716–21 Childéric II	879–81 Louis III	884–88 Charles II, the Fat	1040–60 <i>Geoffrey Martel</i>	1180–1223 Philippe Augustus
	458–82 Childéric I	743–51 Childéric III	893–922 Charles III, the Simple	954–86 Lothaire	1067–1108 Philippe I	1189–99 <i>Richard the Lionheart</i>
		860–66 <i>Robert the Strong</i>		1031–60 Henri I		
		840–77 Charles I, the Bald		987–96 Hugh Capet		
		768–814 Charlemagne				
400	700	800	900	1000	1100	1200
MEROVINGIANS			CAROLINGIAN DYNASTY			CAPETIAN DYNASTY
400	700	800	900	1000	1100	1200
		721–87 Thierry IV		996–1031 Robert II, the Pious		1199–1216 <i>John Lackland</i>
		751–68 P ^é pin the Short		987–1040 <i>Foulques Nerra</i>		
		724–41 <i>Charles Martel</i>		986–87 Louis V		
		711–16 Dagobert III		936–54 Louis IV, the Foreigner		
				888–98 Odo, Count of Paris		
				879–84 Carloman	1108–37 Louis VI, the Fat	1223–6 Louis VIII
				877–79 Louis II, the Stammerer		
			814–40 Louis I, the Pious			



482–511 Clovis I



1137–80 Louis VII



1422-61
Charles VII,
the Victorious



1498-1515 Louis XII,
Father of the People



1643-1715 Louis
XIV, the Sun King

1270-85 Philippe III

1285-1314 Philippe
IV, the Fair

1314-16 Louis X

1316-22
Philippe V,
the Tall

1322-28
Charles IV,
the Fair

1328-50
Philippe VI

1483-98
Charles VIII,
the Affable

1515-47 François I

1547-59 Henri II

1559-60
François II

1774-92 Louis XVI

1804-14
Napoléon I

1300

1400

1500

1600

1700

1800

VALOIS DYNASTY

BOURBON DYNASTY

1300

1400

1500

1600

1700

1800

1226-70
Louis IX
(St Louis)

1350-64
Jean II,
the Good

1364-80
Charles V,
the Wise

1380-1422
Charles VI,
the Fool



1430-80
*René I of
Anjou*

1461-83
Louis XI, the
Spider



1589-1610 Henri IV

1560-74
Charles IX

1574-89 Henri III

1715-74
Louis XV

1814-24
Louis XVIII

1824-30
Charles X

1830-48 *Louis-Philippe I,
Duc d'Orléans,
King of the French*

1852-70
Napoléon III



1610-43 Louis XIII

Neolithic and Roman Loire

Neolithic Culture produced some of France's largest prehistoric tombs and sacred sites. Their builders had Central European roots, as did the Celts who established cities along the Loire in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Julius Caesar's conquest of the valley in 51 BC left the Celtic tribes under a light Roman rule, the basis of peace and prosperity for the next 300 years. The spread of Christianity coincided with Rome's military decline and the rise of kingdoms ruled by Visigoths to the south and Germanic Franks to the north. The Frankish king Clovis I converted to Christianity and took power in 507 by routing the Visigoths.



Baptism of Clovis

Frankish chieftain Clovis converted to Christianity at the start of the 6th century to legitimize his rule.



Palaeolithic Remains

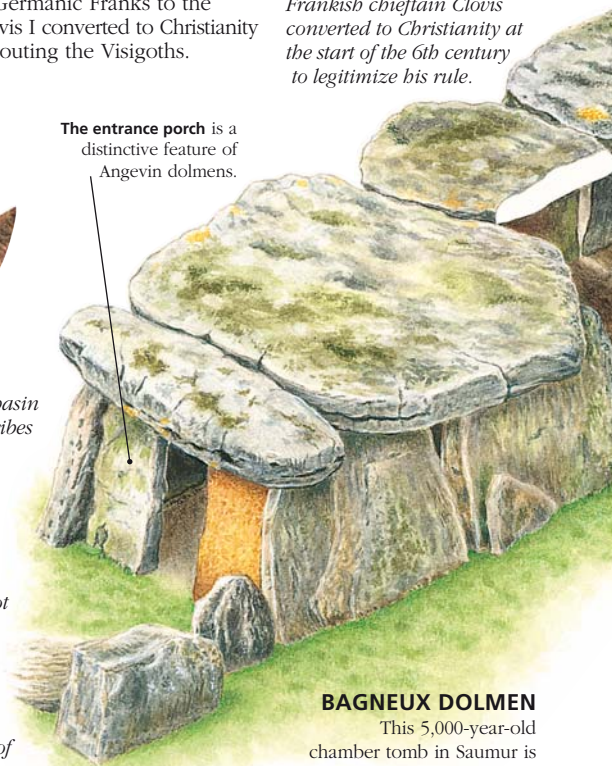
Flint tools made in the Loire basin were traded by Palaeolithic tribes at least 50,000 years ago.



Celtic Art

Celtic art was not dominated by the naturalistic ideals of the occupying Romans. This bronze statuette of a young woman dates from the 1st–2nd century AD.

The entrance porch is a distinctive feature of Angevin dolmens.



BAGNEUX DOLMEN

This 5,000-year-old chamber tomb in Saumur is 21 by 7 m (69 by 23 ft). The nine massive uprights were levered onto loose stones, dragged to the site, tilted and sunk into ditches 3 m (10 ft) deep.

TIMELINE

c.2500 Loire dolmens with porches set new style of Neolithic burial chamber

c.800 Carnutes found settlements at Blois, Chartres and Orléans

57–6 Romans conquer western Loire tribes

51 Julius Caesar ends Gaulish uprising that began in Orléans



Julius Caesar, first to unite Gaul

2500 BC

c.1200 Loire region exports bronze weapons made using local tin resources.

Celtic helmet



100 BC

31 Roman emperor Augustus sets framework for 300 years of Pax Romana (peace and prosperity) in the Loire

AD 1

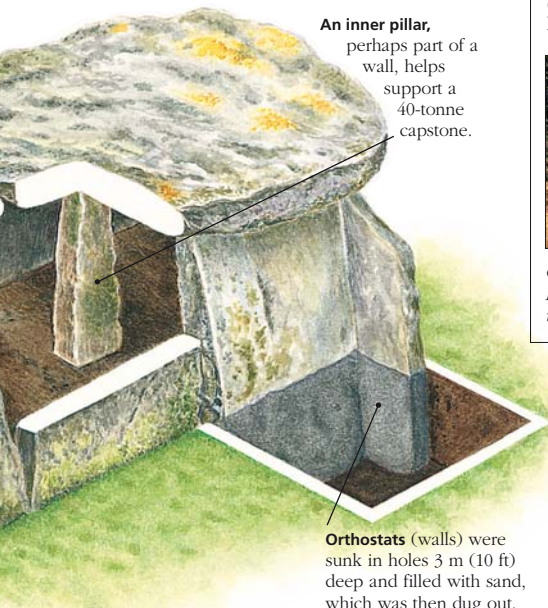
AD 100

50 Loire Valley flourishes as border link between two Gallo-Roman provinces, Lugdunensis and Aquitania



Celtic Armour

The warlike Celts were skilled armourers, as this bronze breastplate of 750–475 BC shows. The Romans found them formidable opponents.

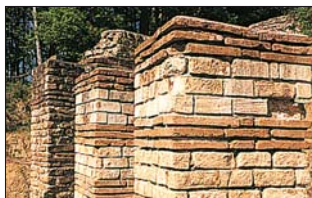


An inner pillar, perhaps part of a wall, helps support a 40-tonne capstone.

Orthostats (walls) were sunk in holes 3 m (10 ft) deep and filled with sand, which was then dug out.

WHERE TO SEE NEOLITHIC AND ROMAN LOIRE

Anjou is rich in Neolithic sights, mostly on the south bank of the Loire. The largest are at Saumur (see pp82–3) and Gennes (p78). Gennes' amphitheatre and the walls at Thésée (p129) are two of the few surviving Gallo-Roman monuments. Museums at Orléans (pp138–9) and Tours (pp114–15) have major Gallo-Roman collections.



Gennes Amphitheatre

Roman gladiatorial combats were held in the amphitheatre at Gennes.

Gallo-Roman Art

This beaten bronze stallion, displayed in the archeology museum in Orléans, was dedicated to Mars, bringer of war and god of agriculture.



Fresh Water by Aqueduct

Roman pillars near Luynes supported a 2nd-century aqueduct which carried spring water to baths in Caesarodunum (Tours).

250 Gaius, Bishop of Tours, among the first Christian evangelists in the Loire

313 Emperor Constantine makes Christianity official Roman religion

372 Martin, Bishop of Tours, leads monastic growth

507 After converting to Christianity, Clovis defeats Visigoths near Poitiers

511 Clovis I dies; his sons divide his lands

498 Clovis I takes Orléans



200

300

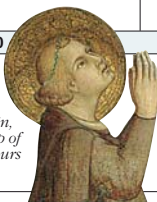
400

500

c.150 Romans build amphitheatre at Gennes

275 Emperor Aurelian gives Orléans independent status

St Martin, Bishop of Tours



451 Visigoth kingdom of Toulouse helps repel Attila the Hun at Orléans

473 Visigoths capture Tours

Wine: an early Loire export

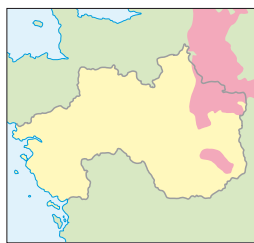
c.550 First record of wine production in the Loire region

The Early Middle Ages



Royal seal of
Henry II

In raising the massive keep at Loches, Foulques Nerra of Anjou was typical of the warlords who took power in the Loire after the 9th century. The chains of citadels they built laid the foundations for the later châteaux. The Plantagenets, who followed Nerra as rulers of Anjou, also claimed territory from Normandy to Aquitaine and then inherited the English throne. It was not until the 13th century that the French King Louis IX brought Anjou back under direct control of the crown. Throughout this period the Church was a more cohesive power than the French crown. Its cathedrals and monastic orders established schools and *scriptoria* (where manuscripts were copied and illuminated), and it was to the Church rather than the throne that feudal warlords turned to mediate their brutal disputes.



THE LOIRE AROUND 1180

Yellow French royal domain

Pink Other fiefs



Gregory I codified the liturgical music sung during his reign as pope (590–604).

St Louis

Popularly called *St Louis* for his piety, Louis IX (1214–70) was the first Capetian monarch to inherit a relatively stable kingdom. A brave crusading knight and just ruler, he forced England to abandon claims to the Loire.



TIMELINE

687 Pépin II establishes the power of the "mayors" of the Carolingian dynasty, ancestors of Charlemagne, over Merovingian kings

732 Charles Martel drives Moors back from the Loire in decisive battle south of Tours

850 Normans lay waste to Loire Valley

866 Robert the Strong, ancestor of Capetian kings, killed by Normans in Anjou

911 Chartres repels Normans

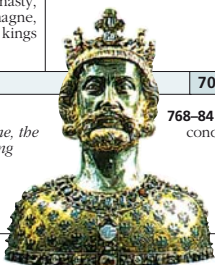
600

700

800

900

Charlemagne, the Frankish king



768–84 Charlemagne conquers Brittany and all Loire

796 Charlemagne's mentor, Alcuin, makes Tours a centre of Carolingian art

Coinage of Charles the Bold





Carolingian Ivory

Ivory plaques, reliquaries and book covers are among the most beautiful Frankish decorative objects to survive Norman destructions of the 10th century. Carolingian art usually served a religious or utilitarian purpose.



Monastic Arts

The development of the Caroline Minuscule style of calligraphy was led by the monks of Tours' Basilique St-Martin in the 9th century.

WHERE TO SEE EARLY MEDIEVAL LOIRE

Early churches such as the one at Cunault (see p79) are charged with medieval atmosphere, as are abbeys such as Noirlac (p149) or at Solesmes (p162) and Fontgombault (p147), where you can hear Gregorian chant. Fortress châteaux such as the one at Loches (p104) and ruined towers at Lavardin (p122) or Montrichard (p128) tell grimmer feudal stories.



Romanesque Capitals

This Romanesque sculpture is on a capital in Cunault church.

Medieval musical notation showed variations in pitch (high and low notes). The length of each note depended on the natural rhythm of the text.



Fine Craftsmanship

Many of the finest surviving pieces of medieval craftsmanship are worked in metal. This 13th-century funerary mask was cast in copper from the effigy of a woman and then gilded.



Hugh Capet of Orléans

Hugh, depicted here being handed the keys to Laon, was elected king in 987, ending the Carolingian dynasty. He set a precedent for kings to seek refuge in the Loire in troubled times.

ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT

This manuscript is the first page of a 13th-century gradual, a book of plainsong sung during mass. It is typical of the style of illuminated manuscripts that were produced by the abbeys of the Loire Valley. This collection of Gregorian chant was compiled by monks of the strict Cistercian Order (see p149).



1101 Founding of Abbaye de Fontevraud

1128 Marriage in Le Mans of Geoffrey Plantagenet and Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England

987 Hugh Capet of Orléans becomes the first Capetian king of France

1096 First Crusade launched

1189 Henry II's death leaves his son, Richard the Lionheart, as the Angevin rival to the French king

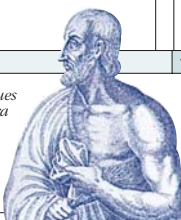
1000

1100

1200

992 Bretons driven out of Anjou by Foulques Nerra

Foulques Nerra



1154 Henry Plantagenet accedes to the English throne as Henry II

1214 Angevin empire ends with defeat of King John at Angers

1125 Thibaut IV of Blois and Champagne rivals Capetian power

Exploring Vienna's Churches

Many of Vienna's Churches have undergone modifications over the centuries, and they often present a fascinating mixture of styles, ranging from Romanesque to Baroque. The great era for church building in the city was in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the triumphant Catholic church, in a spate of Counter-Reformation fervour, remodelled several early churches and built new ones. A number of churches were also constructed after the Turks were defeated in 1683 (see pp26–7), and the city as a whole was able to spread out beyond its earlier confines.

MEDIEVAL CHURCHES

At the heart of the city is the **Stephansdom**. Parts date from Romanesque times but most of the cathedral is Gothic; it contains a collection of Gothic sculpture, including a pulpit by Anton Pilgram (see p78). Vienna's oldest church is the **Ruprechtskirche**, which stands in its own square in the Bermuda Triangle (see p84); its plain façade contrasts with the delicate Gothic tracery of **Maria am Gestade**, which has a filigree spire and a lofty, vaulted interior. The early interior of the **Deutschordenskirche** contains a number of heraldic blazons. A late Romanesque basilica with Gothic modifications lurks behind the façade of the **Michaelerkirche**. The 14th-century

Madonna and Child in the Minoritenkirche

Augustinerkirche contains the hearts of the Habsburg families (see pp24–5) down the centuries as well as Antonio Canova's tomb for Maria Christina (see p102). Behind the façade of the **Minoritenkirche** is a newly-restored Gothic interior; the same is true of the **Burgkapelle**.

17TH-CENTURY CHURCHES

There is little Renaissance architecture in Vienna, but a number of churches built before the Turkish siege survive. The **Franziskanerkirche**, with its gabled façade and theatrical high altar, and the **Jesuitenkirche** are fine examples of the architecture inspired by the Counter-Reformation (see p24). The **Ursulinenkirche**, built between 1665 and 1675, has a high-galleried interior and **Annakirche** is notable for its beautiful Baroque tower. The **Dominikanerkirche** has a majestic early Baroque façade built in the 1630s by Antonio Caneval. Although it dates back to Romanesque

times, the bulk of the rather squat **Schottenkirche** was built between 1638 and 1648. In the middle of the Baroque square of Am Hof is the impressive façade of the **Kirche am Hof**. It was founded by the Carmelites and is also known as "Church of the Nine Choir Angels".



Carving of St Anne (about 1505) in Annakirche, attributed to Veit Stoss

LATE BAROQUE AND NEO-CLASSICAL CHURCHES

After the Turkish defeat (see pp26–7), a number of Viennese High Baroque churches were built. The most exotic is the **Karlskirche**, and just off the Graben is the great **Peterskirche**. The tiny, ornate **Stanislaus-Kostka Chapel** was once the home of a Polish saint. Two graceful 18th-century churches are to be found on the edge of the inner city: the majestic **Maria Treu Kirche** and the **Ulrichskirche**. Joseph Kornhäusel's **Stadtempel** has a Neo-Classical interior.

TOWERS, DOMES AND SPIRES

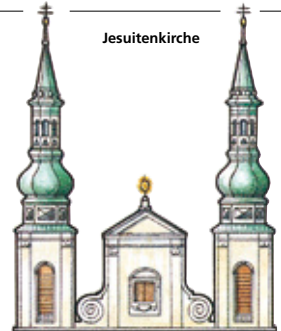
Vienna's skyline is punctuated by the domes, spires and towers of its fine churches. Topping **Maria am Gestade** is a delicate openwork lantern, while the **Ruprechtskirche** tower is characteristically squat. The towers of the **Jesuitenkirche** are Baroque and bulbous, and **Karlskirche** has freestanding columns. **Peterskirche** has an oval dome and small towers.



Ruprechtskirche



Maria am Gestade



Jesuitenkirche



The frescoed interior of the late Baroque Stanislaus-Kostka Chapel

19TH-CENTURY CHURCHES

During the 19th century the prevailing mood of Viennese architecture was one of Romantic historicism. Elements of past styles were adopted and re-created, for churches and for many other municipal buildings, specifically on the Ringstrasse (see pp32–3). The **Griechische Kirche** on Fleischmarkt, took its inspiration from Byzantine architecture, and the inside is replete with iconostases and

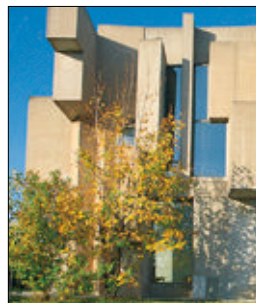


19th-century interior of the Altlerchenfelder Kirche

frescoes. The **Votivkirche**, built just off the Ringstrasse as an expression of gratitude for Franz Joseph's escape from assassination, is based on French Gothic architecture; its richly-coloured interior contains the marble tomb of Count Niklas Salm, who defended Vienna from the Turks during the siege of 1529 (see p24). On Lerchenfelder Strasse the red-brick **Altlerchenfelder Kirche** is a 19th-century architectural hodge-podge of Gothic and Italian Renaissance styles.

20TH-CENTURY CHURCHES

A masterpiece of early 20th-century church architecture is Otto Wagner's (see p57) massive **Kirche am Steinhof**, built to serve a psychiatric hospital. The interior has a slightly clinical air, since it is tiled in white, but the austerity is relieved by Kolo Moser's (see p57) stained-glass windows and mosaics.



The haphazard, sculpted blocks of the modern Wotruba Kirche.

The **Dr-Karl-Lueger-Kirche**, located in the Central Cemetery, was built by a protégé of Otto Wagner, Max Hegele, and has the same monumental feel about it. For true devotees of the modern, there is the **Wotruba Kirche** on Georgsgasse in the suburb of Mauer, designed by the sculptor Fritz Wotruba. Not universally liked, this looks as if it is a haphazard assembly of concrete blocks.

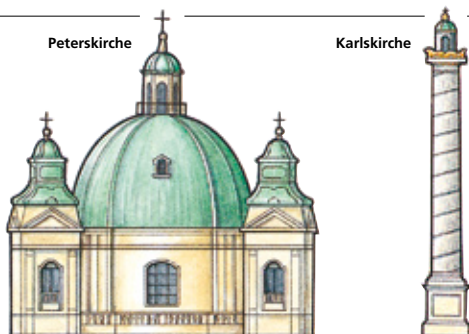
FINDING THE CHURCHES

Altlerchenfelder Kirche,
Lerchenfelder Strasse 111.
Map 3 A1.

Annakirche p80
Augustinerkirche p102
Deutschordenskirche p72
Dominikanerkirche p73
Dr-Karl-Lueger-Kirche p168
Franziskanerkirche p75
Griechische Kirche p81
Burgkapelle p103
Karlskirche pp148–9
Kirche am Steinhof p160
Kirche am Hof p87
Jesusitenkirche p73
Maria am Gestade p85
Maria Treu Kirche p116
Michaelerkirche p92
Minoritenkirche p103
Peterskirche p87
Ruprechtskirche p81
Schottenkirche p110
Stanislaus-Kostka Chapel, Kurrentgasse 2. **Map 2 D5 & 5 C2.**
Stadttempel p84
Stephansdom pp76–9
Ulrichskirche p116
Ursulinenkirche,
Johannesgasse 8.
Map 4 E1 & 6 D4.
Votivkirche p111
Wotruba Kirche p171

Peterskirche

Karlskirche



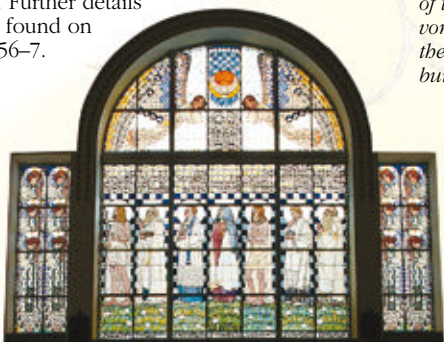
Vienna's Best: Jugendstil

A stroll around Vienna's streets will reveal the richness of the city's turn-of-the-century architecture. Some of the buildings are well known and instantly recognizable, and a few of the public ones, such as the Secession building, can be seen inside. However, it can be just as rewarding to discover the lesser-known buildings and monuments of the period and to savour the variety of finely-crafted architectural details. Further details can be found on pages 56–7.



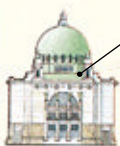
Strudelhof Steps

The setting for a famous novel of the same name by Heimato von Doderer (1896–1966), these magnificent steps were built by Theodore Jäger in 1910.



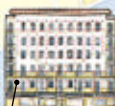
Kirche am Steinhof

Commissioned for the grounds of a lunatic asylum on the outskirts of the city, this church with its grand copper dome was designed by Otto Wagner in 1905. The stained-glass windows are by Kolo Moser.



Scottenring
and
Asergrund

Museum and
Townhall
Quarter

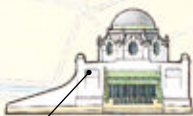


Opera and
Naschmarkt



Kaiser Pavilion

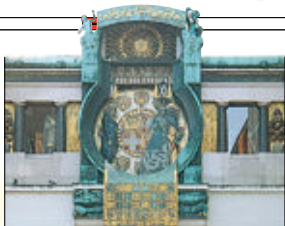
Otto Wagner's imperial station pavilion (1899) was built as a showcase for his work.



Wagner Apartments

Otto Wagner's two apartment blocks (1899) overlook the River Wien. No. 40, the Majolikabaus, is covered with ceramic decoration. No. 38 has gold Jugendstil motifs.





Anker Clock

This clock, created by the artist Franz Matsch in 1911, sits on a bridge spanning two buildings on the Hober Markt. Every hour, on the hour, moving figures parade across the clock face.



Postsparkasse

One of Otto Wagner's masterpieces, this post office savings bank exhibits the finest workmanship outside, and inside. Even the interior ventilator shafts are by Wagner.



Stadtspark Portals

The city's municipal park is adorned with magnificent portals (1903-7), designed by Friedrich Ohmann as part of a project to regulate the flow of the River Wien.



Karlsplatz Pavilions

Two recently-restored pavilions standing in Karlsplatz were built as part of Otto Wagner's scheme for Vienna's turn-of-the-century underground system.



Secession Building

Nicknamed the Golden Cabbage because of its golden filigree dome, the Secession Building was designed at the turn of the century by Joseph Maria Olbrich for exhibitions of avant-garde art. In the basement is Gustav Klimt's Beethoven Frieze.



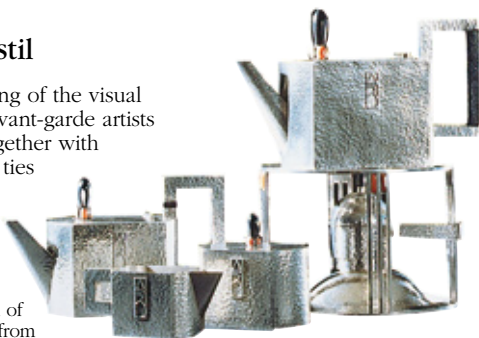
Exploring Viennese Jugendstil

The turn of the century saw a flowering of the visual arts in Vienna. A new generation of avant-garde artists formed the Secession in 1896 and, together with architects and designers, forged close ties between the fine and decorative arts, and created new architectural styles.

PAINTING AND DRAWING

Viennese art at the turn of the century did not conform to one particular style, but there were common elements. These included an obsession with line and rich surface pattern, as well as themes such as the *femme fatale*, love, sex and death. The

finest collection of paintings from this period is in the **Museum of 19th- and 20th-Century Art** where pictures by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) and Egon Schiele (1890–1918) feature prominently. Paintings by both artists and their



Hoffman tea service (1903) in the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts

contemporaries also form part of the permanent display at the **Wien Museum Karlsplatz**. Further examples are at the **Museum of Modern Art** in the MuseumsQuartier.

The **Albertina** sometimes shows Schiele drawings. Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* is in the **Secession Building**, and the decorative schemes he produced for the **Burgtheater** and **Kunsthistorisches Museum** are still in situ.



Decoration (1891) by Gustav Klimt in the Kunsthistorisches Museum

APPLIED ARTS

The Wiener Werkstätte – an arts and crafts studio – was founded by Josef Hoffmann (1870–1956) in 1903, and produced jewellery, fabrics, ceramics, metalwork, cutlery, bookbinding and fashion accessories with the same artistic consideration normally given to painting or sculpture. An outstanding collection is in the **Austrian Museum of Applied Arts**, which also houses a document archive open to researchers. Glass designed by Hoffmann for the Viennese firm of Lobmeyr is displayed in the **Lobmeyr Museum**.

FAVOURITE JUGENDSTIL MOTIFS

Jugendstil motifs were similar to those employed by the French Art Nouveau movement, but were generally made up of a more rigorous, geometric framework. Decorations based on organic plant forms such as sunflowers were very popular, as were female figures, heads and masks. Abstract designs made up of squares and triangles were also used to great effect.



Sunflower motif from the Karlsplatz Pavilions by Otto Wagner



Postcard designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich from Ver Sacrum

FURNITURE

The leading Secession designers, such as Hoffmann and Kolo Moser (1868–1918), wanted interior design to return to the simple lines of Biedermeier style (see pp30–1) after the excesses of the Ringstrasse era. The **Austrian Museum of Applied Arts** has several interesting displays of their work, as well as that of the Thonet firm, which made the bentwood furniture admired by the Wiener Werkstätte. Furniture was often conceived as just one element of interior design. Unfortunately, many interiors have disappeared or are not open to the public, but the **Wien Museum Karlsplatz**, which also has some pieces of Jugendstil furniture, has a re-creation of Adolf Loos's (see p92) living room. This is a rare example of a progressive Viennese interior from the turn of the century, created before the architect finally broke with the Secession.



Writing desk and chair by Kolo Moser (1903) in the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts



Altar in the Kirche am Steinhof (1905–7)

ARCHITECTURE

Anyone walking around Vienna will notice several buildings with charming Jugendstil details. By the 1890s young architects were beginning to react against buildings of the Ringstrasse era, many of which were pastiches of earlier historical styles. The leading architects at this time were Otto Wagner (1841–1918) and Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867–1908), who collaborated on a number of projects, notably the design and installation of a new city railway and its stations, the most famous examples of which are the **Kaiser Pavilion** at Hietzing and the **Karlsplatz Pavilions**, as well as the **Wagner Apartments** on the Linke Wienzeile. Working independently, Wagner produced the extraordinary **Kirche am Steinhof** as well as the **Postsparkasse**, while Olbrich designed the

Secession Building as an exhibition space for radical artists and designers. Hoffmann created a number of houses for Secession artists in **Steinfeldgasse**. There are also some Jugendstil houses in **Hietzing**, while the **Anker Clock** by Franz Matsch (1861–1942) is an example of the late flowering of the style. Other examples of street architecture are the **Strudelhof Steps** (1910) by Theodore Jäger and the **Stadt-park Portals** by Friedrich Ohmann (1858–1927) and Joseph Hackhofer (1868–1917).

FINDING

JUGENDSTIL VIENNA

Albertina p102
Anker Clock p84
Austrian Museum of Applied Arts pp82–3
Burgtheater pp132–33
Hietzing pp186–7
Kaiser Pavillon p171
Karlsplatz Pavilions pp146–7
Kirche am Steinhof p160
Kunsthistorisches Museum pp122–7
Lobmeyr Museum p105
Museum of Modern Art p120
Museum of 19th- and 20th-Century Art p154–5
Postsparkasse p81
Secession Building p138
Steinfeldgasse p188
Stadt-park Portals p182
Strudelhof Steps, Liechtensteinstrasse.
Map 1 C3
Wagner Apartments p139
Wien Museum Karlsplatz p146



Postcard design by Joseph Maria Olbrich from *Ver Sacrum*



Gold leaf detail from the Wagner Apartments



Lettering by Alfred Roller from *Ver Sacrum*



Abstract fabric design by Josef Hoffmann

Vienna's Best: Coffee Houses

Coffee houses have been an essential part of Viennese life for centuries. The coffee house is more than just a place to go to drink coffee. It is a meeting place, somewhere to linger over a snack or a light lunch, and a refuge from city life. Each coffee house attracts its own particular clientele and has its own unique atmosphere. Most of them also serve alcohol. Further details of what coffee houses have to offer can be found on pages 60–61.



Central

Once the meeting place of writers and free thinkers, the most splendid of all the coffee houses in Vienna has now been restored to its former grandeur.



Landtmann

This comfortable and formal coffee house used to be frequented by Sigmund Freud. Today it is visited by theatregoers and actors from the nearby Burgtheater, and by journalists and politicians.

Schottenring and
Alsergrund



Museum and
Townball
Quarter



Hofburg
Quarter



Sperl

Just outside the city centre, the Sperl has a faithful clientele, including many young people who come here for the billiard tables and hot strudels.



Opera and
Naschmarkt



Eiles

Its location near various government offices has made the Eiles a favourite haunt of officials and lawyers.

Café Museum

The Café Museum was built in 1899 to designs by Adolf Loos (see p92), but was remodelled in the 1930s. It has now been restored in accordance with Loos's original design.





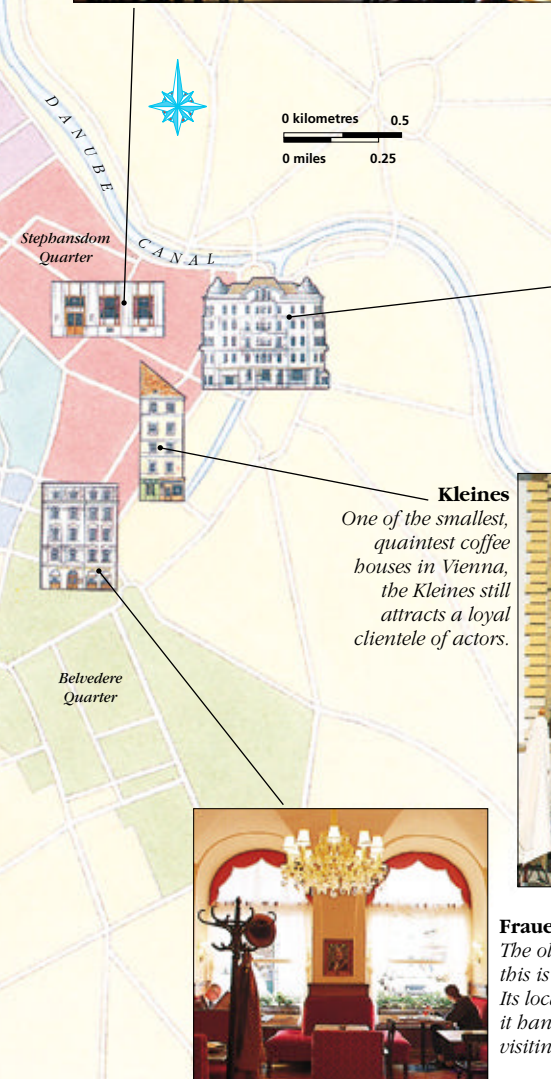
Hawelka

This famous coffee house has long cultivated its bohemian image. The atmosphere is warm and theatrical, and no visit to Vienna is complete without a late-night cup of coffee or a drink here.



Prückel

The Prückel has been shabby and run down for as long as anyone can remember, but it has become a mecca for bridge players and locals who crowd into its back room.



Kleines

One of the smallest, quaintest coffee houses in Vienna, the Kleines still attracts a loyal clientele of actors.



Frauenhuber

The oldest coffee house in Vienna, this is where Mozart once performed. Its location off Kärntner Strasse makes it handy for shoppers and for tourists visiting the nearby Stephansdom.



Exploring Vienna's Coffee Houses

The Viennese coffee house serves many functions and to make the best of the institution it helps to understand the many roles it plays in the lives of local people.

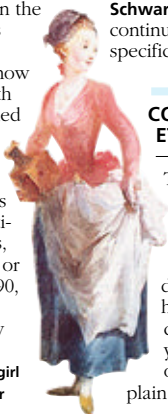
In a coffee house you can read the newspapers, share a simple lunch with a friend, or in some play a game of bridge or billiards. Most places serve wines, beers and spirits as well as coffee. The coffee house is a priceless urban resource and, though no longer unique to Vienna, it is here that it has flourished in its most satisfying form. Vienna also has many *Café-Konditoreien* (see p203).

THE HISTORY OF THE COFFEE HOUSE

Legend maintains that the first coffee house opened its doors after the defeat of the Turks in 1683 (see p26).

However, historians insist that coffee was known in the city long before this date. Coffee houses took the form we know today in the late 18th century. They reached their heyday in the late 19th century, when they were patronized by cliques of like-minded politicians, artists, writers, composers, doctors or civil servants. In 1890, for instance, the controversial literary

18th-century Viennese girl holding a coffee grinder

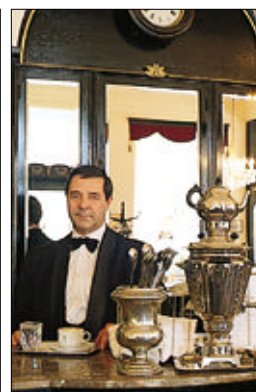


group Jung Wien met regularly at the **Griensteidl**, while the essayist Peter Altenberg was reputed to have never been seen outside his favourite café, the **Central**.

Today, as in the past, the **Ministerium**, **Museum**, **Frauenhuber**, **Raimund**, **Eiles**, **Schwarzenberg** and **Zartl** continue to attract their own specific clientele.

COFFEE HOUSE ETIQUETTE

There is a simple but formal etiquette attached to a coffee house. A waiter, almost certainly dressed in a tuxedo, however shabby the coffee house, will take your order, which will often be served with a plain glass of water. Once



Waiter at the Dommayer café

you have ordered you are free to occupy your table for as long as you like. A cup of coffee is not cheap, but entitles you to linger for an hour or two and to read the newspapers which are freely available. The grander coffee houses, such as the **Landtmann** and **Central**, will also have a selection of foreign newspapers and periodicals.

WHAT COFFEE HOUSES HAVE TO OFFER

Coffee houses often function as local clubhouses. At the **Sperl** you can play billiards, at the **Prückel** there are bridge tables, and at

TYPES OF COFFEE

Just as the coffee house is a Viennese institution, so too are the extraordinary varieties of coffee that are available. Just asking for a cup of coffee in Vienna will not always guarantee a result, as the Viennese are exceedingly particular about how they take their coffee; over the centuries they have devised their own specific vocabulary to convey to the waiter precisely how they like their beverage served. The list that follows will cover most variations of the Viennese cup of coffee, although you may well find local ones.

Brauner:

coffee with milk (small or large).

Melange:

a blend of coffee and hot milk.

Kurz:

extra strong.

Obers:

with cream.

Mokka:

strong black coffee.

Kapuziner:

black coffee with a dash of milk, usually frothed.

Schwarzer:

black coffee (small or large).

Konsul:

black coffee with a dash of cream.

Kaffeinfreier Kaffee:

decaffeinated coffee.



Türkischer: plain, strong black Turkish coffee served in the traditional manner.



Espresso: strong black coffee made by machine. Ask for it *gestreckt* for a weak one.

the **Dommayer** you can attend literary readings. The **Central** and **Bräunerhof** both offer live piano music with your coffee. The **Kleines** is, as its name suggests, too tiny to offer entertainment, but still draws a regular crowd. The **Imperial** is part of the hotel of the same name. Coffee houses outside the city centre include the excellent **Westend**.



Coffee house sign

COFFEE PLAIN AND SIMPLE

There are times when you quite simply want a good cup of coffee – when newspapers or a table of your own are luxuries you can dispense with. On such occasions you should keep an eye out for an Espresso bar, where you can lean informally against

a counter and order coffee at a half or a third of the price you would normally expect to pay at a coffee house. The *Café-Konditoreien* belonging to the Aida chain, apart from serving delicious cakes and pastries, also function as Espresso bars.



Old Viennese coffee machine in Diglas



Pharisäer: strong black, with whipped cream on top, served with a small liqueur glass of rum.



Schlagobers: strong black coffee served with either plain or whipped cream.



Einspanner: large glass of coffee with whipped cream on top.



Kaisermelange: black coffee with an egg yolk and brandy.

DIRECTORY

Bräunerhof

Stallburggasse 2. **Map** 5 C3.
 Sat & Sun afternoons.

Central

Palais Ferstel, Herrergasse 14.
Map 2 D5 & 5 B2.

Diglas

Wollzeile 10. **Map** 6 D3.

Dommayer

Dommayergasse 1, Hietzing.
 first Sat of month.

Eiles

Josefstädter Strasse 2. **Map** 1 B5.

Frauenhuber

Himmelfortgasse 6.
Map 4 E1 & 6 D4.

Griensteidl

Michaelerplatz 2.
Map 2 D5 & 5 B3.

Hawelka

Dorotheergasse 6.
Map 2 D5 & 5 C3.

Imperial

Hotel Imperial,
 Kärntner Ring 16.
Map 4 E2 & 6 D5.

Kleines

Franziskanerplatz 3. **Map** 6 D4.

Café Landtmann

See p131.

Ministerium

Georg-Coch-Platz 4.
Map 2 F5 & 6 F3.

Museum

Friedrichstrasse 6.
Map 4 D2.

Prückel

Stubenring 24. **Map** 6 F3.
 evenings.

Raimund

Museumstrasse 6.
Map 3 B1.

Schwarzenberg

Kärntner Ring 17.
Map 6 D5.

Perl

Gumpendorfer Strasse 11.
Map 3 A4.

Westend

Mariahilfer Strasse 128.
Map 3 A3.

Zartl

Rasumofskygasse 7,
 Landstrasse.

VIENNA THROUGH THE YEAR

Spring often arrives unexpectedly, with a few days of sunshine and warmth. The climax of spring is the Wiener Festwochen in May. Summers are long and hot, and ideal for swimming and for river trips on the Danube (see pp178–9) during July and August, when some venues officially close. Vienna comes alive again in September when the most important theatres reopen. More often than not,

there is an Indian summer at this time, and it is still warm enough to sit in the Stadtpark. As autumn turns to winter, the streets fill with stalls selling chestnuts and by the feast of St Nicholas on 6 December, snow has often fallen. Christmas is a family occasion, but the New Year is celebrated in style as it heralds the start of the carnival season. The Wiener Tourismusverband (see p239) has details of important events.

SPRING

Vienna is beautiful in spring and is the time for the **Wiener Festwochen** (see *May*). It is also a season that brings a few days of balmy weather, and when beautiful colours appear in the parks and the Prater woods (see pp162–63). This is the best time of the year to visit the Stadtpark (see p98) with its open-air bandstand and much-photographed resident peacock. The Volksgarten, Burggarten and the great parks of the Belvedere and Schönbrunn also come into their own and there are some splendid views of the city from the Stephansdom tower.

MARCH

Easter Market (*two weeks before Easter*), held at the Freyung. Items on sale include arts, crafts and traditional food.

Schönbrunner

Schlosskonzerte (*until end Oct*), at the Orangery, Schönbrunn Palace (see p172). Performances of popular melodies of Johann Strauss.



Runners taking part in the annual Spring Marathon



A collection of life-sized dolls on display during the Wiener Festwochen

APRIL

Volkspriester Funfair (*1 Apr–31 Oct*), held in the Prater woods (pp162–63).

Spring Marathon starts from Schönbrunn Palace (see pp172–3), passing the Hofburg, Ringstrasse and Opera House, and ends at the Neues Rathaus (Town Hall).

Frühlingsfestival (*2nd week Apr to mid-May*). Classical music festival alternating between the Musikverein (p146) and the Konzerthaus (p229).

Spanish Riding School (*until Jun*). Lipizzaner horses' performances in the Winter Riding School (pp98–9).

Hofburg Orchestra (*until Oct*). Concerts at Musikverein (p146) and Hofburg (pp96–7).

Kursalon (*until end Oct*). Open-air concerts (p229). Indoor concerts all year.

MAY

Tag der Arbeit (*1 May*). Public holiday. Every year, Labour Day is celebrated with parades on Rathausplatz and Ringstrasse.

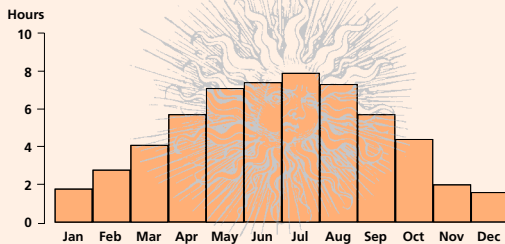
Maifest (*1 May*), in the Prater (pp162–63) with music and children's programmes.

Vienna Music Festival (*6 May–12 Jun*), part of the Wiener Festwochen programme, which begins a few days earlier at the Theater an der Wien (p138) and the Messepalast (p120).

Dancing on the Vindobona (*15 May to end Sep*). Board the boat at Schwedenplatz for a cruise on the Danube.

Wiener Festwochen (*mid-May to mid-Jun*). Vienna's greatest festival features operas, plays and performing arts.

AVERAGE DAILY HOURS OF SUNSHINE



Sunshine Chart

June, July and August are the hottest months in Vienna, with between six and eight hours of sunshine each day, but summer can also be quite damp and humid. Although the city cools down in September, Indian summers are quite common.

SUMMER

Summer can be both the busiest and most relaxing time in Vienna. The great theatres may be closed officially, but the Jazz Festival is on at the Opera House and the Volkstheater in July, and Mozart operas are performed in Schönbrunn Park until mid-August. The Danube beaches are ideal for sunbathing, swimming and other watersports on sunny days.



Summer outside the Votivkirche

JUNE

Corpus Christi (2 Jun). Public holiday. Catholic festival held in honour of the Eucharist.

Vinova (2nd week Jun), wine fair in the Prater (pp162–63).

The Concordia Ball

(2nd Fri in Jun) takes place at the Neues Rathaus (p130).

Ball der Universität

(18 Jun) held at the University (p130).

Donauinselfest (last weekend in Jun), three-day pop concert on Danube island.

JULY

Outdoor films, operas and concerts (until Sep) shown on a giant screen in Rathausplatz. Seating is provided free.

Klangbogen Wien

(Jul–Aug). Music festival with concerts in some of Vienna's most famous venues. Opera performances and chamber and symphony concerts are held at Theater an der Wien (p138).

Jazzfest (1st two weeks Jul), part of Klangbogen Wien music festival. Venues include the Opera House (pp140–41), the Volkstheater (p230) and the arcaded courtyard of the Neues Rathaus (p130).

International Dance

Weeks

(mid-Jul to 3rd week Aug)

at the Universitäts Sportzentrum, Schmelz; Volkstheater (p230).



Bathing beside the Danube

Summer Dance Festival

(Im Puls) (end-Jul to 3rd week Aug) is held at the Volkstheater (p230) and Universitäts Sportzentrum at Schmelz.

Soirée bei Prinz Orlofsky

(until mid-Aug) held at the Schönbrunner Schlosstheater. Operetta by the Kammeroper.

Seefestspiele Mörbisch

(Thu–Sun mid-Jul to end Aug). An operetta festival which takes place in Mörbisch, some 40 km (25 miles) away.

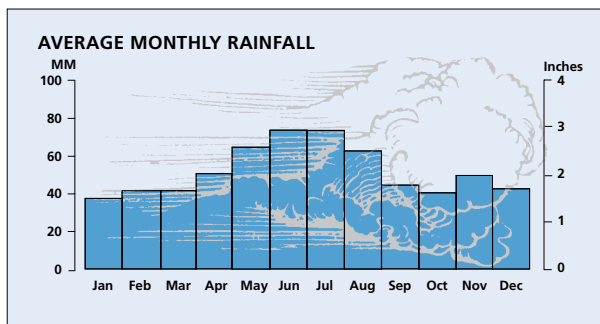
AUGUST

Maria Himmelfahrt

(15 Aug), public holiday. A Catholic festival which celebrates the assumption of the Madonna.



Seefestspiele Mörbisch, an annual operetta festival performed against the backdrop of Lake Neusiedl



Rainfall Chart

The summer months are not only the hottest but also the wettest, helping to keep the city cool. During spring and autumn, days can be mild, with some drizzle, until November, which can be very wet. Around 600 mm (23 inches) of rain falls annually.

AUTUMN

In Vienna, autumn means a new start. The theatres, and particularly Vienna's great opera houses, reopen once again. Shops get ready to tempt buyers with their range of autumn fashions. Then, almost overnight, all the shop windows seem to be filled with figures of St Nicholas and his wicked companion Krampus. This cute little furry devil appears everywhere. It is only after 6 December that the shop windows are finally cleared for Christmas displays.

SEPTEMBER

Spanish Riding School performances (*until end Oct*) and training sessions of the Lipizzaner horses (*pp98-9*). **Vienna Boys' Choir** (*mid-Sep to Dec*) perform at Mass at the Burgkapelle (*p103*) on Sundays.

Trotting in the Krieau (*until Jun*). Trotting races at the Prater (*pp162-63*).

OCTOBER

National Holiday (*26 Oct*). Celebrations to mark the passing of the Neutrality



The Vienna Boys' Choir performing at the Konzerthaus



Krampus, the wicked furry devil who accompanies St Nicholas

Act in 1955, which was followed by the withdrawal of the Allied troops stationed in Austria since 1945.

Viennale (*end Oct*), film festival at Gartenbau, Parkring 12; Metro, Johannesgasse 4; Künstlerhaus, Akademiestrasse 13; and Stadtkino, Schwarzenbergplatz 7-8. **Wien Modern** (*until end Nov*). Modern music festival at the Konzerthaus (*p229*).

NOVEMBER

Allerheiligen (*1 Nov*). Public holiday. Catholic festival celebrating All Saints' Day.

Antik-Aktuell (*2nd week Nov*), art and antiques fair held at the Hofburg.

Schubertiade (*3rd week Nov*) at the Musikverein (*p146*).

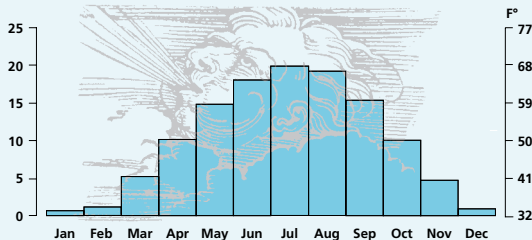
Krippenschau (*until mid-Dec*), display of historic mangers at Peterskirche (*p87*).

Christkindlmarkt (*2nd Sat Nov to end Dec*), Christmas market and children's workshop by the Rathaus (*p130*).

Christmas markets (*from last Sat Nov*) held at the Freyung, Heiligenkreuzerhof, Schönbrunn, Karlsplatz and Spittelberg.

International choirs (*last Sat Nov*) at the Town Hall, or Rathaus (*p130*).

AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURE



Temperature Chart

The chart shows the average temperatures each month. Top temperatures in July and August can reach 25°C (77°F) although May and September are also quite warm. Winters are icy, and temperatures can be as low as -1.4°C (29.5°F) in January.

WINTER

Roasting chestnuts over hot coals is a regular winter sight on Vienna's streets. As Christmas draws near, stalls offer mulled wine and hot snacks and shops enter into the festive spirit putting up lights and decorations.

The Viennese celebrate Christmas Eve with a traditional meal consisting of *Fischbeuschelsuppe*, a creamy fish soup, followed by fresh fried carp. The usual dish which is eaten on Christmas Day is goose, although turkey is becoming more popular.

New Year also marks the start of Fasching, Vienna's famous Carnival season.

DECEMBER

Christmas markets (continue from November).

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

- New Year's Day** (1 Jan)
- Epiphany** (6 Jan)
- Easter Sunday**
- Easter Monday**
- Tag der Arbeit** (1 May)
- Ascension Day** (6th Thu after Easter)
- Whit Monday** (6th Mon after Easter)
- Corpus Christi** (2 Jun)
- Maria Himmelfahrt** (15 Aug)
- National Holiday** (26 Oct)
- Allerheiligen** (1 Nov)
- Maria Empfängnis** (8 Dec)
- Christmas Day** (25 Dec)
- Stefanitag** (26 Dec)



Chestnut-roasting in winter

Maria Empfängnis (8 Dec).

Public holiday. Catholic festival celebrating the Immaculate Conception.

Midnight Mass (*Christmas Eve*) held in the Stephansdom (pp76–7). No tickets needed but arrive early for seats.

Stefanitag (26 Dec). Public holiday for Boxing Day.

New Year's Eve performance of Die Fledermaus (31 Dec) at the Opera House (pp140–41) and Volksoper (p229). The performance is shown on a large screen in Stephansplatz (p70).

New Year's Eve concerts at the Konzerthaus (p229) and Musikvereinsaal (p146).

Kaiserball (31 Dec) at the Hofburg (pp96–7).

New Year's Eve in the city centre: a street party with snacks and drink. Marquees provide music and cabaret.

JANUARY

New Year's Concert (31 Dec & 1 Jan) by the great Vienna Philharmonic at the Musikverein (p146). Requests for tickets for next year's concert must arrive on 2 Jan (p228).

Beethoven's Ninth

Symphony (31 Dec & 1 Jan) is performed at the Konzerthaus (p229).

Fasching (6 Jan to Ash Wed), the Vienna Carnival includes the **Heringschmaus** (Ash Wed), a hot and cold buffet.

Holiday on Ice (mid- to end Jan). This is held at the Stadthalle, Vogelweidplatz.

Resonanzen (2nd to 3rd week Jan). Festival of ancient music at the Konzerthaus (p229).

Vienna Ice Dream (mid-Jan to end Feb). Ice-skating in front of City Hall (p130).

FEBRUARY

Opera Ball (last Thu before Shrove Tue), one of the grandest balls of Fasching (p141).

Wintertanzwoche (5–13 Feb). Part of the Dance Festival (see below). Events are held in the MuseumsQuartier (p118).

Dance Festival (17 Feb to 27 Mar), includes classic and jazz dance at the Universitäts Sportzentrum at Schmelz.

Haydn Tage (3rd week Feb to 1st week Mar). Haydn's music at the Konzerthaus (see p229).



The Christkindlmarkt, in front of the Neues Rathaus





VIENNA AREA BY AREA



STEPHANSDOM QUARTER 68-87

HOFBURG QUARTER 88-105

SCHOTTENRING AND ALSERGRUND 106-111

MUSEUM AND TOWNHALL QUARTER 112-133

OPERA AND NASCHMARKT 134-141

BELVEDERE QUARTER 142-157

FURTHER AFIELD 158-179

THREE GUIDED WALKS 180-187



STEPHANSDOM QUARTER

The winding streets and spacious squares of this area form the ancient core of Vienna. Following World War II, subterranean excavations uncovered the remains of a Roman garrison from 2,000 years ago, and every succeeding age is represented here, from the Romanesque



Plaque on No. 19 Sonnenfelsgasse, once part of the university

arches of the Ruprechtskirche to the steel and glass of the spectacular Haas Haus in Stephansplatz. Many of the buildings in the area house government offices, businesses, taverns and stylish shops. Dominating the skyline is the Stephansdom, the focus of the city at its geographical centre.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Streets and Squares

- Am Hof 85
- Annergasse 18
- Bäckerstrasse 14
- Blutgasse 3
- Domgasse 4
- Fleischmarkt 23
- Griechengasse 24
- Grünangergasse 6
- Hoher Markt 27
- Jewish District 26
- Judenplatz 31
- Kurentgasse 33
- Schönlaterngasse 10
- Sonnenfelsgasse 12

Historic Buildings

- Academy of Sciences 9
- Altes Rathaus 29
- Bohemian Court Chancery 28
- Haas Haus 15
- Heiligenkreuzerhof 13
- Postsparkasse 22
- Winter Palace of Prince Eugene 17

Churches and Cathedrals

- Annakirche 19
- Deutschordenskirche 2
- Dominikanerkirche 7
- Franziskanerkirche 16
- Jesuitenkirche 8
- Kirche am Hof 34
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- Peterskirche 36
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Museums and Galleries

- Austrian Museum of Applied Arts pp82-3 21
- Cathedral Museum 11
- Clock Museum 32
- Mozarthaus Vienna 5
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GETTING THERE

This area is served by the Stephansplatz (lines U1, U3), Stubentor (line U3) and Schwedenplatz (lines U1, U4) U-Bahn stations. Trams 1 and 2 go along Franz-Josefs-Kai and the Ringstrasse. Buses 1A, 2A and 3A stop at the junction of Hoher Markt and Marc-Aurel-Strasse.



KEY

Street-by-Street map
See pp70-71

U-Bahn station

0 metres 250
0 yards 250

Street-by-Street: Old Vienna

This part of the inner city retains its medieval layout, offering a complex of lanes, alleys and spacious courtyards. The influence of the church is particularly evident. You can find remains of monastic orders such as the Dominicans and feudal orders such as the Teutonic Knights, as well as ideological orders, for example the Jesuits. Yet there is nothing ossified about the area: at night the bars and restaurants on Bäckerstrasse and Schönlaterngasse are thronged with people until the early hours of the morning. Dominating everything is the 137-m high (450-ft) spire of the Stephansdom cathedral in the very heart of Vienna.

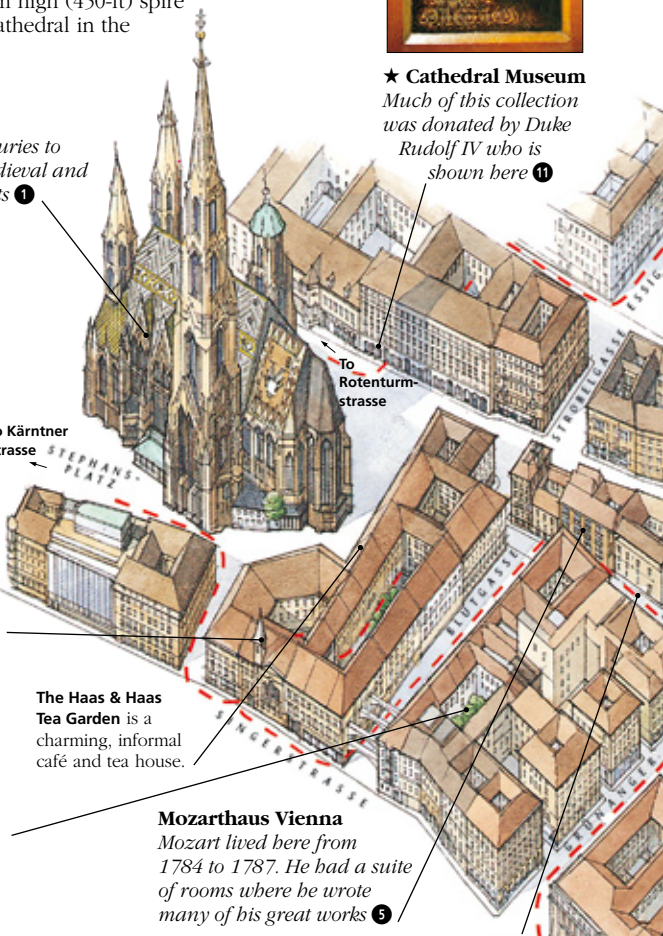
★ Stephansdom

The cathedral took centuries to build and is rich in medieval and Renaissance monuments ①



Deutschordenskirche

A remarkable Treasury, with objects collected by German aristocrats, lies alongside this Gothic church ②



The Haas & Haas Tea Garden is a charming, informal café and tea house.

Mozarthaus Vienna

Mozart lived here from 1784 to 1787. He had a suite of rooms where he wrote many of his great works ⑤

Domgasse

This pretty street includes a bookshop at No. 8, Buchhandlung 777 ④



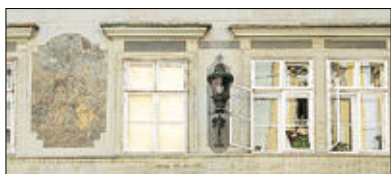
Blutgasse

Courtyards like this are typical of the tenement houses on Blutgasse ③



★ Cathedral Museum

Much of this collection was donated by Duke Rudolf IV who is shown here ①



Schönlaterngasse
The lantern at No. 6 gave this charming street its name 10

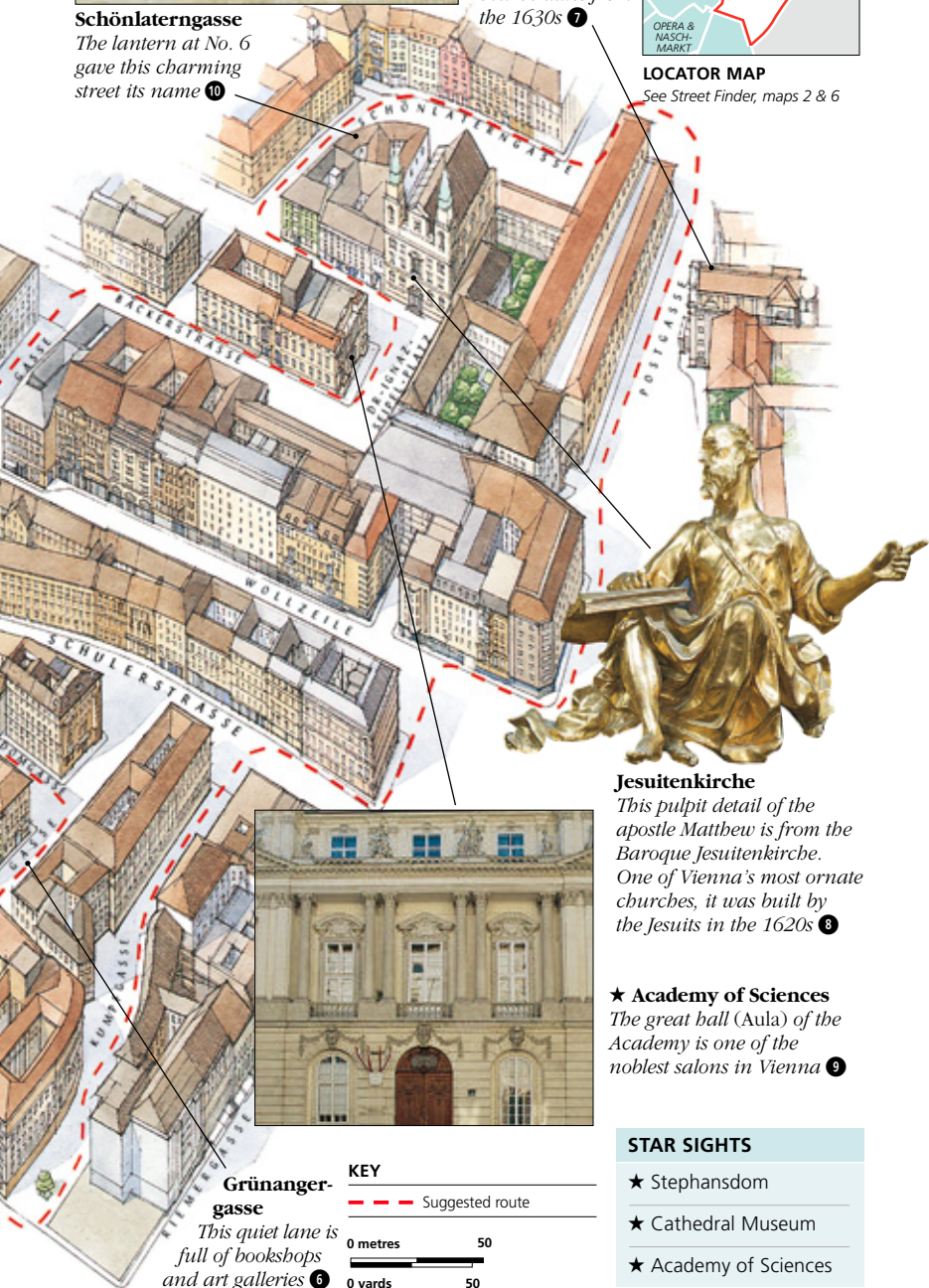
Dominikanerkirche

Originally consecrated on this site in 1237, the present Baroque church dates from the 1630s 7



LOCATOR MAP

See Street Finder, maps 2 & 6



Jesuitenkirche

This pulpit detail of the apostle Matthew is from the Baroque Jesuitenkirche. One of Vienna's most ornate churches, it was built by the Jesuits in the 1620s 8

★ Academy of Sciences

The great ball (Aula) of the Academy is one of the noblest salons in Vienna 9



Grünangergasse

This quiet lane is full of bookshops and art galleries 6

KEY

--- Suggested route

0 metres 50

0 yards 50

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Stephansdom
- ★ Cathedral Museum
- ★ Academy of Sciences

Stephansdom ❶

See pp76–9.

Deutschordens- kirche ❷

Singerstrasse 7. **Map** 2 E5 & 6 D3. **Tel** 5121065. **U** Stephansplatz. **Church** 7am–6pm daily. **Treasury** 10am–noon Mon & Thu, 3–5pm Wed & Fri, 10am–noon & 3–5pm Sat. **Tue & Sun, public hols.**

This church belongs to the Order of Teutonic Knights, a chivalric order which was established in the 12th century. It is 14th-century Gothic, but was restored in the 1720s by Anton Erhard Martinelli. Numerous coats of arms of teutonic knights and memorial slabs are displayed on the walls. The altarpiece from 1520 is Flemish and incorporates panel paintings and carvings of scenes from the Passion beneath some very delicate traceried canopies.

The Order's Treasury is situated off the church's courtyard and now serves as a museum, displaying various collections acquired by its Grand Masters over the centuries. The starting point is a room which houses a large collection of coins, medals and a 13th-century entronement ring. This leads into the second room which contains chalices and Mass vessels worked with silver filigree. Following this is a display of maces, daggers and ceremonial



Inner courtyard of No. 9 Blutgasse, the Fährnichshof

garb. The final exhibits show some Gothic paintings and a Carinthian carving of *St George and the Dragon* (1457).

Blutgasse ❸

Map 2 E5 & 6 D3. **U** Stephansplatz.

A local legend relates that this street acquired its gruesome name – Blood Lane – after a massacre in 1312 of the Knights Templar (a military and religious order) in a skirmish so violent that the streets flowed with blood. But there is no evidence to support this story and the street's name belies its charm.

Its tall apartment buildings date mostly from the 18th century. Walk into No. 3 and see how the city's restorers have linked up the buildings and their courtyards. No. 9, the Fährnichshof, is particularly impressive.

Domgasse ❹

Map 2 E5 & 6 D3. **U** Stephansplatz.

In addition to the Figarohaus, Domgasse boasts some interesting buildings, including the Trienter Hof, with its airy courtyard. No. 6 is a house of medieval origin called the Kleiner Bischofshof or small bishop's house: it has a 1761 Matthias Gerl façade. Next door is the site of the house where Franz Georg Kolschitzky lived and, in 1694, died. It is said that he claimed some Turkish coffee beans as a reward for his bravery in the 1683 Turkish siege, and later opened Vienna's first coffee house. The truth of this story, however, is doubtful.

Mozarthaus Vienna ❺

Domgasse 5. **Map** 2 E5 & 6 D3. **Tel** 5053100. **U** Stephansplatz. 10am–8pm daily. **www.mozarthausvienna.at**

Mozart and his family occupied a flat on the first floor of this building from 1784 to 1787. Of Mozart's 11 Viennese residences, this is the one where he is said to have been happiest. It is also where he composed a significant number of his masterworks: the exquisite Haydn quartets, a handful of piano concerti, and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Restored for the anniversary year 2006, the Mozarthaus now has exhibitions on two upper floors as well as the first-floor flat.



Winged altarpiece in the Deutschordens-kirche (1520)



Elaborate nave of the Dominikanerkirche

Grünangergasse 6

Map 4 E1 & 6 D3. Stephansplatz.

This quiet lane takes its name from the creperie Zum Grünen Anker at No. 10, a tavern frequented by Franz Schubert in the 19th century.

No. 8's portal has crude carvings of rolls, croissants and pretzels. It is known as the Kipferlhaus after a Viennese crescent-shaped roll. The former Fürstenberg Palace, from 1720, has a Baroque portal with carved hounds racing to the top of the keystone.

Dominikanerkirche 7

Postgasse 4. Map 2 E5 & 6 E3. Tel 5129174. Stephansplatz, Schwedenplatz. 7am–7pm Mon–Sat, 7am–9pm Sun.

The Dominican order of monks came to Vienna in 1226, and by 1237 they had consecrated a church here. In the 1630s Antonio Canevale

designed their present church, which boasts a majestic and really rather handsome Baroque façade. The interior is equally imposing. The central chapel on the right has swirling Rococo grilles and candelabra, and there is a very beautiful gilt organ above the west door. Its casing dates from the mid-18th century. The frescoes by Tencala and Rauchmiller are especially noteworthy, as is the high altar.

Jesuitenkirche 8

Dr-Ignaz-Seipel-Platz 1. Map 2 E5 & 6 E3. Tel 5125232. Stubentor, Stephansplatz, Schwedenplatz. 7am–6:30pm daily.

Andrea Pozzo, an Italian architect, redesigned the Jesuitenkirche between 1703 and 1705 and its broad, high façade dominates the Dr-Ignaz-Seipel-Platz. In the 1620s the Jesuits decided to move their headquarters here in order to be near the Old University, which they controlled. The

Jesuit order was the dominant force behind the Counter-Reformation. The Jesuits were not afraid of making a statement, and the church's grand design and high façade reflects this dominance.

The interior is gaudy, with plump marble columns screening the side chapels. Pozzo's ceiling frescoes are cleverly executed using a *trompe l'oeil* effect and the pews are richly carved.

Academy of Sciences 9

Dr-Ignaz-Seipel-Platz 2. Map 2 E5 & 6 E3. Schwedenplatz, Stubentor. Tel 515810. 8am–5pm Mon–Fri.

Once the centrepiece of the Old University, the Akademie der Wissenschaften has an impressive Baroque façade. Designed in 1753 by Jean Nicolas Jadot de Ville-Issey as the *Aula*, or great hall, it has recently been restored. A double staircase leads up to a huge salon that, despite its reconstruction after a fire in 1961, is still one of the great rooms of Vienna.

Elaborate frescoes adorn the ceilings of the Ceremonial Hall and the walls are composed of marble embellished with Rococo plasterwork. Haydn's *Creation* was performed here in 1808 in the presence of the composer: it was the eve of his 76th birthday and his last public appearance.



Fountain by Salomon Kleiner on the Academy of Sciences (about 1755)



The Baroque Bernhardskapelle (left), seen from Schönlaterngasse

Schönlaterngasse 10

Map 2 E5 & 6 E3. Stephansplatz, Schwedenplatz. **Alte Schmiede**
Tel 5128329. 10am–3pm Mon–Fri.

The attractive curving lane derives its name (Pretty Lantern Lane) from the handsome wrought-iron lantern which is clamped to No. 6. This is a copy of the 1610 original which is now in the Wien Museum Karlsplatz (see p146). At No. 4, a solid early 17th-century house guards the curve of the street. No. 7, the Basiliken-haus, which is of medieval origin, displays on its façade an artist's impression of a mythical serpent, dating from 1740. A serpent is reputed to have been discovered in 1212 in a well by the house.

The composer Robert Schumann lived at No. 7a from 1838 to 1839. No. 9 is the Alte Schmiede – the large

smithy from which it takes its name has been reassembled in the basement. This complex also contains an art gallery and a hall used for poetry readings and musical workshops.

Cathedral Museum 11

Stephansplatz 6. Map 2 E5 & 6 D3.

Tel 515523560. Stephansplatz.

10am–5pm Tue–Sat. 24 & 31 Dec, Maundy Thu & Easter Mon.

Known in German as the Dom und Diözesanmuseum, its exhibits include 18th-century religious paintings by important Austrian artists such as Franz Anton Maulbertsch, and some 16th- and 17th-century rustic carvings. There are also works by the Dutch painter Jan van

Hemessen. Not to be missed is the display of medieval carvings, many of which are of the Madonna and Child.

The Treasury is spectacular as many of the items were the personal gift of Duke Rudolf IV to the Cathedral. His shroud is housed here as well as a famous portrait of him by a Bohemian master dating from the 1360s (see p70). Other items include the St Leopold reliquary from 1592, which is encrusted with figures of saints and coats of arms, and some outstanding enamels from the 12th-century.

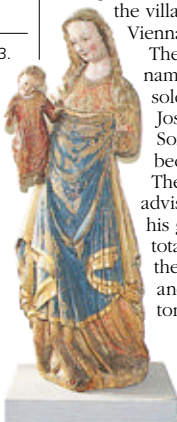
Sonnenfelsgasse 12

Map 2 E5 & 6 E3. Stephansplatz, Schwedenplatz.

Fine houses line this pleasant street. Though by no means uniform in style, most of the dwellings on the north side of the street are solid merchant and patrician houses dating from the late 16th century.

No. 19, which was built in 1628 and renovated in 1721, was once part of the Old University (see p73). No. 11 has an impressive courtyard. Many of the balconies overlooking the courtyard have been glassed in to their full height so as to provide extra living space. No. 3 has the most elaborate façade, and contains a *Stadtbeuriger* called the Zwölf Apostelkeller (see p218). This is an urban equivalent of the *Heurige*, the wine growers' inns found in the villages outside Vienna (see p219).

The street was named after a soldier called Joseph von Sonnenfels. He became Maria Theresa's legal adviser and under his guidance, she totally reformed the penal code and abolished torture.



Gothic Madonna (1325) in the Cathedral Museum

Heiligenkreuzerhof 13

Schönlaterngasse 5. **Map** 2 E5 & 6 E3.

Tel 5125896. Schwedenplatz.

6am–9pm Mon–Sat. Sun.

Bernhardskapelle

on request

In the Middle Ages, the rural-monasteries expanded by establishing a presence in the cities. Secularization in the 1780s diminished such holdings, but this one, belonging to the abbey of Heiligenkreuz (see p176), survived.

The buildings around the courtyard housing the city's Applied Arts College present a serene 18th-century face. On the south side of the courtyard is the Bernhardskapelle. Dating from 1662, but altered in the 1730s, the chapel is a Baroque gem. Across from the chapel a patch of wall from Babenberg times (see pp22–3) has been exposed to remind you that, as so often in Vienna, the building is much older in origin than it at first appears.



Fresco at No. 12 Bäckerstrasse

Bäckerstrasse 14

Map 2 E5 & 6 D3. Stephansplatz.

Nowadays people visit this street, which used to house the city's bakers in medieval times, to sample its nightlife rather than its bread. The architecture is also of considerable interest: No. 2 sits beneath a 17th-century tower, and has a pretty courtyard. Opposite, at No. 1, is the site of the Alte Regensburgerhof, the outpost of Bavarian merchants who were given incentives to work in Vienna in the 15th century. No. 8 is the former palace of Count Seilern dating from 1722, and No. 7 is famous for its arcaded Renaissance

courtyard and stables, which is the only surviving example in Vienna. Two other houses of Renaissance origin are located at Nos. 12 and 14.

Haas Haus 15

Stephansplatz 12. **Map** 2 E5 & 6 D3.

Tel 5356083. Stephansplatz.

6am–2am daily.

Commissioning a modern-building directly opposite the Stephansdom was a sensitive task, and the city entrusted its design to one of Austria's leading architects, Hans Hollein. The result is the 1990 Haas Haus, a shining structure of glass and blue-green marble that curves elegantly round right into the Graben. The building has a very pleasing asymmetrical appearance, with decorative elements such as lopsided cubes of marble attached to the façade, a protruding structure high up resembling a diving board and a Japanese bridge inside. The atrium within is surrounded by cafés, shops, a restaurant, Do & Co (see p214) and offices.

Franziskanerkirche 16

Franziskanerplatz 4. **Map** 4 E1 & 6 D4.

Tel 5124578. Stephansplatz.

6:30am–noon & 2–5:30pm Mon–Sat, 7am–5:30pm Sun.

The Franciscans were fairly late arrivals in Vienna and one of their first tasks was to build a church on the site of a former medieval convent. Dating from 1603, the church totally dominates the Franziskanerplatz.

The façade is in South German Renaissance style, and is topped by an elaborate scrolled gable with obelisks.

**Gleaming
façade of Haas
Haus (1990)**

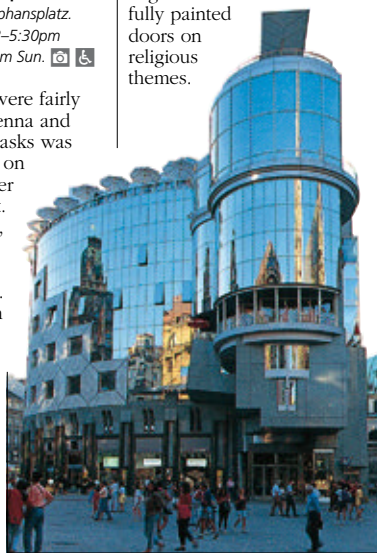


Detail from Andrea Pozzo's altar (1707) in the Franziskanerkirche

The Moses Fountain in front of the church was designed by the Neo-Classical Johann Martin Fischer in 1798.

The interior is in full-blown Baroque style and includes a finely-modelled pulpit dating from 1726, and richly-carved pews. A dramatic high altar by Andrea Pozzo rises to the full height of the church. Only the front part of the structure is three-dimensional – the rest is *trompe l'oeil*. Look out for a 1725 *Crucifixion* by Carlo Carlone among the paintings in the side altars.

You usually have to ask a passing monk for permission to see the church organ. It is worth being persistent, as this is the oldest organ in Vienna (1642), designed by Johann Wöckerl. It has statues of angel musicians and beautifully painted doors on religious themes.



Stephansdom 1



Carving of Rudolf IV

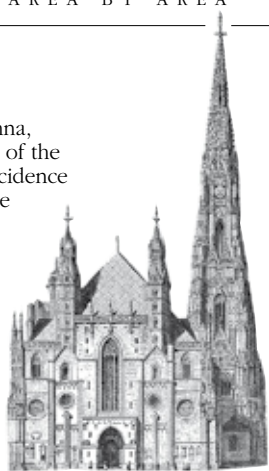
Situated in the centre of Vienna, the Stephansdom is the soul of the city itself; it is no mere coincidence that the urns containing the entrails of some of the Habsburgs lie in a vault beneath its main altar. A church has stood on the site for over 800 years, but all that remains of the original 13th-century Romanesque church are the Giants' Doorway and Heathen Towers.

The Gothic nave, choir and side chapels are the result of a rebuilding programme in the 14th and 15th centuries, while some of the outbuildings, such as the Lower Vestry, are Baroque additions.

★ Giants' Doorway and Heathen Towers

The entrance and twin towers apparently stand on the site of an earlier heathen shrine.

The North Tower, according to legend, was never completed because its master builder, Hans Puchsbaum, broke a pact he had made with the devil, by pronouncing a holy name. The devil then caused him to fall to his death.



Entrance to the catacombs

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Giants' Doorway and Heathen Towers
- ★ Steffl or Spire
- ★ Tiled Roof
- ★ Singer Gate

The symbolic number "05" of the Austrian Resistance Movement was carved here in 1945.

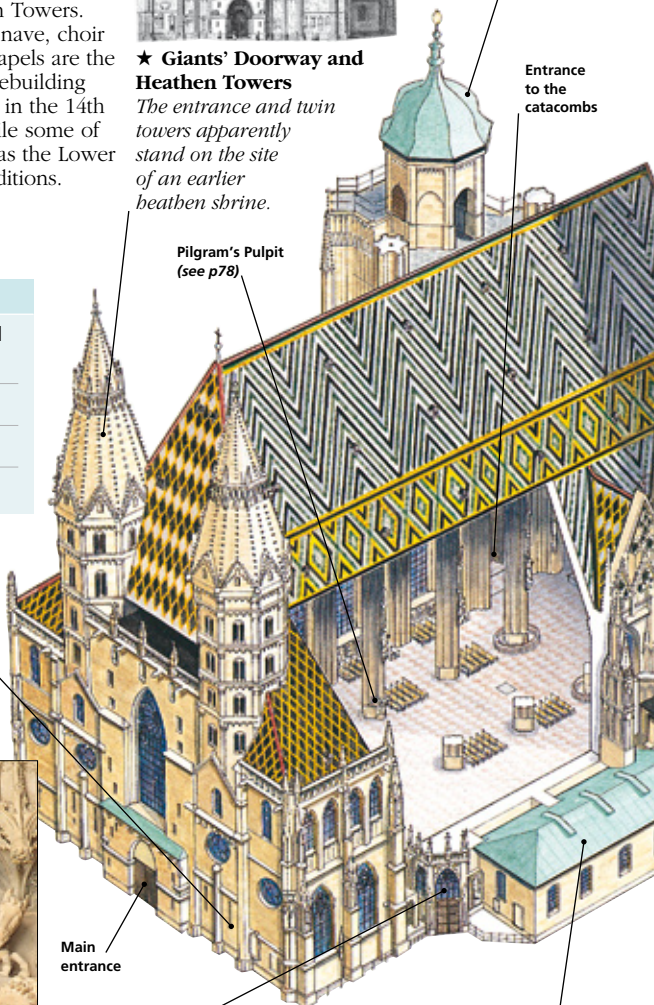


Main entrance

★ Singer Gate

This was once the entrance for male visitors. A sculpted relief above the door depicts scenes from the life of St Paul.

Lower Vestry



Pilgrim's Pulpit (see p78)



★ Steffl or Spire

The 137-m high (450-ft) Gothic spire is a famous landmark. From the Sexton's Lodge (see p79), visitors can climb the stairs as far as a viewing platform.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Stephansplatz 3, A-1010.

Map 2 E5 & 6 D3. **Tel** 51553135.

U Stephansplatz. **Bus** 1A.

6am–10pm daily. **H** High Mass: 10:15am Sun & hols; Jul & Aug 9:30am, 7pm Sat in English. Guided tours in English: Apr–Oct 3:45pm daily; Pummerin Bell (elevator) 8:30am–5:30pm daily; catacomb tours daily. **IG** **ES** **FB**

IG **ES** **FB** organ concerts May–Nov: Wed. www.stephansdom.at



★ Tiled Roof

Almost a quarter of a million glazed tiles cover the roof; they were meticulously restored after the damage caused in the last days of World War II.

JOHANNES CAPISTRANO

On the exterior north-eastern wall of the choir is a pulpit built after the victory over the Turks at Belgrade in 1456. It was from here that the Italian Franciscan, Johannes Capistrano, (1386–1456) is said to have preached against the Turkish invasion in 1451. The 18th-century Baroque statue above it depicts the triumphant saint trampling on a defeated Turkish invader.



South-eastern entrance

TIMELINE

1147 The first Romanesque building on the site consecrated by the Bishop of Passau

1304 Duke Rudolf IV initiates work on High Gothic Albertine Choir

1515 Anton Pilgram carves his pulpit

1711 Pummerin bell cast from remains of guns left by Turks on their retreat from Vienna

1948 Reconstruction and restoration carried out

1100

1200

1300

1400

1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

2000

1230 Second Romanesque building erected on the same ground

1359–1440 Main aisle, southern arches and southern tower built

1515 Double wedding of grandchildren of Maximilian with children of the King of Hungary takes place

1556 North Tower is roofed over

1783 Stephansdom churchyard closed after plague

1916 Emperor Franz Joseph's funeral

1945 Cathedral catches fire during bombing

Inside the Stephansdom

The lofty vaulted interior of the Stephansdom contains an impressive collection of works of art spanning several centuries. Masterpieces of Gothic sculpture include the fabulously intricate pulpit, several of the figures of saints adorning the piers, and the canopies or baldachins over many of the side altars. To the left of the High Altar is the early 15th-century winged Wiener Neustädter Altar bearing the painted images of 72 saints.

The altar panels open out to reveal delicate sculpture groups.

The most spectacular Renaissance work is the tomb of Friedrich III, while the High Altar adds a flamboyant Baroque note.



The Catacombs

A flight of steps leads down to the catacombs, which extend under the cathedral square.



Portrait of Pilgram

Master craftsman Anton Pilgram left a portrait of himself, holding a square and compass, below the corbel of the original organ.

Christ with Toothache (1420) is the irreverent name of this figure; an old legend has it that Christ afflicts mockers with toothache.

Lift to the Pummerin Bell

Bishop's Gate

The Tirna Chapel houses the grave of the military hero Prince Eugene.

The Statue of Crucified Christ above the altar has, according to legend, a beard of human hair that is still growing.

Main entrance



★ Pilgram's Pulpit

Pilgram's intricate Gothic pulpit is decorated with portraits of the Four Fathers of the Church (theologians representing four physiognomic temperaments), while Pilgram himself looks out from a "window" below.



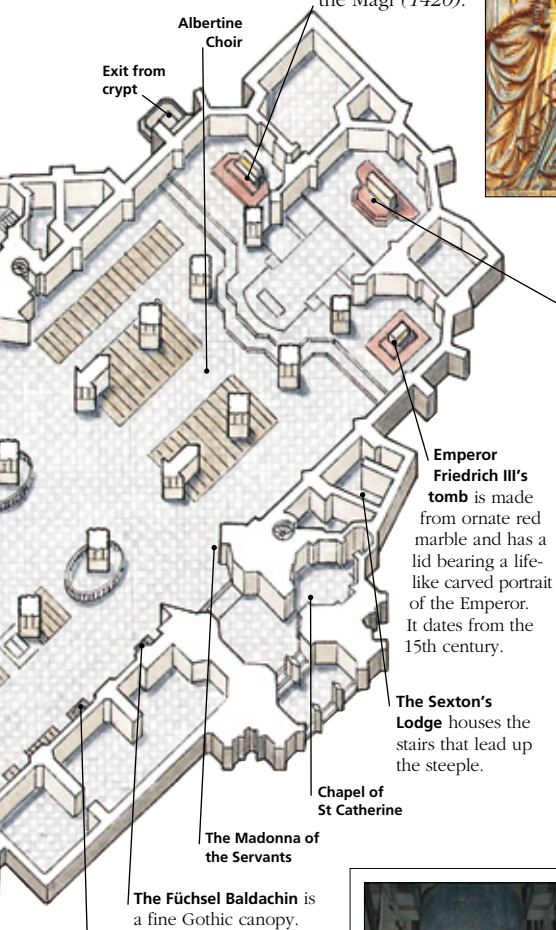
Organ Gallery and Case

In 1960 this modern organ was installed in the loft above the entrance. A more recent organ is in the south choir area.

The Canopy with Pötschen Madonna is a 16th-century canopy that shelters a 1697 icon of the Madonna, to which Prince Eugene's victory over the Turks at Zenta was attributed. It comes from Pecs, a village in Hungary.

★ Wiener Neustädter Altar

Friedrich III commissioned the elaborate altarpiece in 1447. Painted panels open out to reveal an earlier carved interior showing scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and Christ. This panel portrays the Adoration of the Magi (1420).



The Trinity Altar probably dates from around 1740.

Emperor Friedrich III's tomb is made from ornate red marble and has a lid bearing a life-like carved portrait of the Emperor. It dates from the 15th century.

The Sexton's Lodge houses the stairs that lead up the steeple.

Chapel of St Catherine

The Madonna of the Servants

The Füchsel Baldachin is a fine Gothic canopy.



★ High Altar

Tobias Pock's altarpiece shows the martyrdom of St Stephen. The sculptures were fashioned by Johann Jakob Pock in 1647.



THE PUMMERIN BELL

The bell that hangs in the North Tower, known as the *Pummerin* or "Boomer", is a potent symbol for the city reflecting Vienna's turbulent past. The original bell was made from melted-down cannons abandoned when the Turks fled Vienna in 1683. The bell crashed down through the roof in 1945 when fire swept through the Stephansdom, so a new and even larger bell was cast using the remains of the old.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Pilgram's Pulpit
- ★ Wiener Neustädter Altar
- ★ High Altar



Statuary in the hall of the Winter Palace of Prince Eugene

Winter Palace of Prince Eugene 17

Himmelpfortgasse 4–8. **Map** 4 E1 & 6 D4. **Tel** 51433. Stephansplatz. **Vestibule** 8am–4pm Mon–Fri.

Now the Ministry of Finance (Bundesministerium für Finanzen), the Winter Palace was commissioned in 1694 by Prince Eugene of Savoy (see p27), hero of the 1683 Turkish siege. It was begun by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (see p149) and taken over by Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt (see p152) in 1702. The result is an imposing town mansion, considered one of the most magnificent Baroque edifices in Vienna. Maria Theresa bought it for the state in 1752. Access is limited, but you can view the Baroque staircase (see p43) and glance into the courtyard with its lovely Rococo fountain.

Annagasse 18

Map 4 E1 & 6 D4. Stephansplatz. **Zum Blauen Karpfen** to the public.

Now splendidly Baroque, Annagasse dates from medieval times. It is pedestrianized and a pleasant place to browse in the bookshops.

Of note are the luxurious Mailberger Hof and the stucco-decorated Römischer Kaiser hotels (see p196). No. 14's lintel has a Baroque carving of babes making merry, while above this is a relief of the blue carp that gives the house, once a pub, its name: Zum Blauen Karpfen. No. 2 is the 17th-century Esterházy Palace, which is now a casino. Until a few years ago you could see the Countess Esterházy sweeping her front doorstep!

Annakirche 19

Annagasse 3b. **Map** 4 E1 & 6 D4. **Tel** 5124797. Stephansplatz. 7am–7pm daily.

There has been a chapel in Annagasse since 1320, but the present Annakirche dates from 1629 to 1634, and it was renovated by the Jesuits during the early 18th century. Devotion to St Anne has deep roots in Vienna and this very intimate church is often full of quiet worshippers.

The finest exterior feature of the church is the moulded copper cupola over the tower. Daniel Gran's ceiling frescoes are now fading and his richly-coloured painting glorifying St Anne on the High Altar is more striking. Gran, together with Franz Anton Maulbertsch, was a leading painter of the Austrian Baroque period. The first chapel on the left houses a copy of a carving of St Anne

from about 1505 – the original is in the cathedral museum (see p74). St Anne is portrayed as a powerfully maternal figure and shown with her daughter, the Virgin Mary, who in turn has the baby Jesus on her knee. The carving is attributed to the sculptor Veit Stoss.

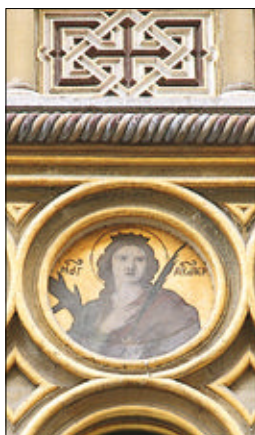
Haus der Musik 20

Seilerstätte 30. **Map** 4 E1. **Tel** 51648. 10am–10pm daily. on request. www.hdm.at

The House of Music opened in 2000 and makes the most of the latest audio-visual and interactive technologies to explain and demonstrate all aspects of music. Visitors move through “experience zones” such as the Instrumentarium, with its giant instruments, and the Polyphonium, which is a collection of different sounds.



Moulded copper cupola over the tower of the Annakirche



Detail on the façade of the Griechische Kirche on Griechengasse

Austrian Museum of Applied Arts 21

See pp82–3.

Postsparkasse 22

Georg-Coch-Platz 2. **Map** 2 F5 & 6 F3. **Tel** 514000. Schwedenplatz. 8am–3pm Mon–Wed & Fri, 8am–5:30pm Thu.

This building is the Austrian Post Office Savings Bank and is a wonderful example of Secession architecture (see pp54–57). Designed between 1904 and 1906 by Otto Wagner, it still looks unashamedly modern. The building features the architect's characteristic overhanging eaves, spindly aluminium columns supporting a canopy, heroic sculptures of angels and ornament-like nailheads protruding from the surface of the building.

Wagner was a pioneer in incorporating many functional elements into his decorative schemes. Inside the banking hall the metal columns are clad in aluminium, and tubular heating ducts encircle the hall.

Fleischmarkt 23

Map 2 E5 & 6 D2–E3. Schwedenplatz. **Griechische Kirche** **Tel** 5122133. 9am–4pm Mon–Fri.

Fleischmarkt, the former meat market, dates from 1220. The

small cosy inn called the Griechenbeisl (see p213) is its best-known landmark. On its façade is a woodcarving of a bagpiper known as *Der liebe Augustin* (Dear old Augustin). Rumour has it that during the 1679 plague, this bagpiper slumped drunk into the gutter one night and, taken for dead, was put in the plague pit. He woke, attracted attention by playing his pipes and was rescued. Miraculously, he did not catch the plague.

Next to the Griechenbeisl is the Neo-Byzantine Griechische Kirche (Greek church of the Holy Trinity). The versatile architect Theophil Hansen (see p32) created its rich, gilt appearance in the 1850s.

A passage links the Griechenbeisl to Griechengasse.

Griechengasse 24

Map 2 E5 & 6 E2. Schwedenplatz. **Griechische Kirche**. **Tel** 5122133. by appt, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm for mass only Sat & Sun.

This street name refers to the Greek merchants who settled here in the 18th century and it leads up from Rotenturmstrasse. The house on the right dates from 1611 but has since been altered. Opposite is the Griechische Kirche (St George's), not to be confused with the Griechische Kirche in Fleischmarkt. This one was built in 1803 but the gable was added later, in 1898. No. 7 is a 17th-century house. The façade was rebuilt in the late 18th century.



Carving of the bagpiper on the façade of the Griechenbeisl, Fleischmarkt

Ruprechtskirche 25

Ruprechtsplatz. **Map** 2 E5 & 6 D2. **Tel** 5356003. Schwedenplatz. 9:30–11:30am Mon–Fri & for mass 5pm Sat & 10:30am Sun; Jul–Aug: for mass 6pm Sat only. Donation expected.



Ivy-clad façade of Ruprechtskirche

St Ruprecht (see p22) was the patron saint of Vienna's salt merchants and the church that takes his name overlooks the merchants' landing stage on the Danube canal. There is a statue of the saint holding a tub of salt at the foot of the Romanesque tower. Salt was a valuable commodity in the Middle Ages, and evidence suggests that the church dates back to the 11th century, making it the oldest church in Vienna. The interior is less interesting, having been restored at various times, but the chancel has two panes of Romanesque stained glass. The choir is 13th century, the vaulted south aisle 15th century.

Austrian Museum of Applied Arts ②

The renovated MAK (Museum für angewandte Kunst) acts both as a showcase for Austrian decorative arts and as a repository for fine objects from around the world. Originally founded in 1864 as a museum for art and industry, it expanded and diversified over the years to include objects representing new artistic movements. The museum has a fine collection of furniture, including some classical works of the German cabinet-maker David Roentgen, textiles, glass, Islamic and East Asian art and fine Renaissance jewellery. In 1993 the museum was completely renovated and each room was re-designed by a different leading artist. The result is a series of displays that lend the exhibits a unique, unusual flavour.



★ Dubskey Porcelain Room

A reassembly of a room (around 1724) in the Dubskey Palace at Brno, Czech Republic.



Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance Room

Blue walls set off the furniture and ceramics in display cases designed by Matthias Esterházy in 1993.

MUSEUM GUIDE

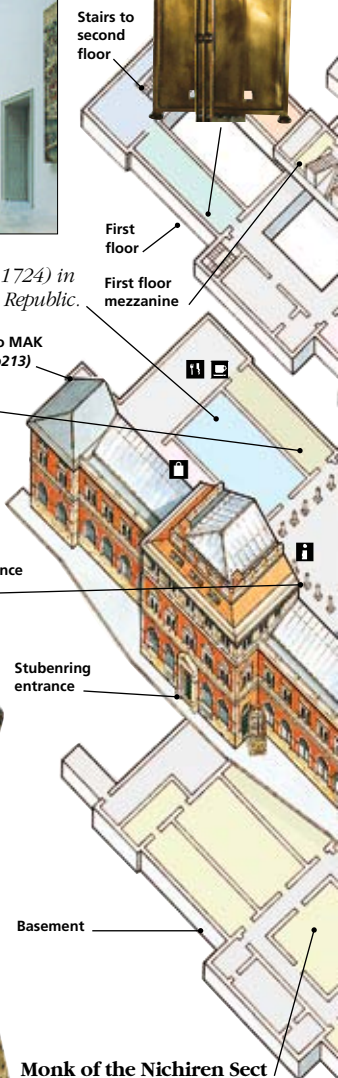
The basement houses the individual collections, and the extension is used for special exhibitions. Most of the permanent collection is displayed in the ground-floor galleries, although the Wiener Werkstätte collection plus 20th- and 21st-century architecture is on the first floor. Stairs in the west wing lead to the contemporary design rooms.

KEY

	Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance
	Baroque, Rococo
	Wiener Werkstätte
	Art Nouveau, Art Deco
	Islamic Art
	Biedermeier
	20th-century design
	Individual collections
	Temporary exhibition space
	Non-exhibition space

★ Wiener Werkstätte Collection

Kolo Moser created this brass vase, inlaid with citrines (false topaz), for the Wiener Werkstätte in 1903.



Monk of the Nichiren Sect

This Japanese wooden sculpture of a praying monk dates from the Muromachi Period (around 1500).

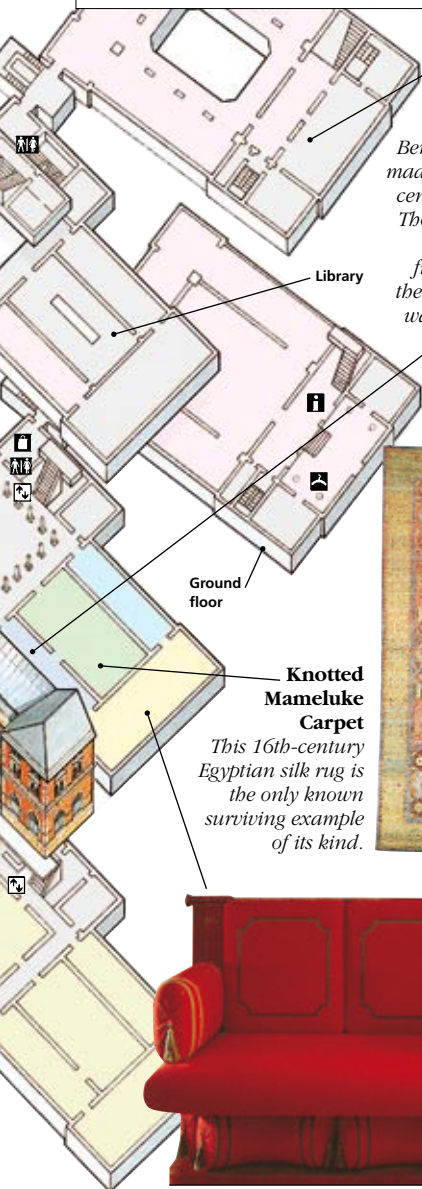
THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE

In 1903 Josef Hoffman (pictured) and Kolo Moser founded a co-operative arts and crafts workshop, the Wiener Werkstätte. This promoted all aspects of design from postage stamps and book illustrations to fabric, furniture, jewellery and interiors. The museum houses its archives, which include sketches, fabric patterns and fine pieces.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Stubenring 5. **Map** 2 F5 & 6 F3.
Tel 711360. **U** Stubentor. **Bus** 1A, 74A, **Tram** 1, 2. **S** Landstrasse.
 ☐ 10am–midnight Tue, 10am–6pm Wed–Sun. **☑** 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec (24 & 31 Dec: 10am–3pm). **📶** **📷** **♿** **📱**
📄 **📄** **📄** www.MAK.at



Lecture Hall

Mundus Chair

Bentwood furniture was made popular by the 19th-century designer, Michael Thonet (1796–1871), who pioneered bentwood furniture techniques in the 1830s. This example was manufactured by Mundus in 1910.

Library

Ground floor

Knotted Mameluke Carpet

This 16th-century Egyptian silk rug is the only known surviving example of its kind.



STAR FEATURES



- ★ Dubsy Porcelain Room
- ★ Wiener Werkstätte Collection
- ★ Biedermeier Room

★ Biedermeier Room

This cherrywood sofa (1825–30), designed and manufactured by Danhauser'sche Möbelfabrik, is an outstanding example of Viennese Empire-style Biedermeier design (see pp30–31). The original upholstery has been reproduced.



Jewish District 26

Map 2 F5 & 6 D2.  **Schwedenplatz, Stadttempel** Tel 531040.  Mon–Thu (am) by appt or for tours at 11:30am and 3pm (take identification).

Vienna's Jewish District is more famous today for its area of bars and discos called the Bermuda Triangle than for its Jewish community. Judengasse is now a bustling lane lined with clothes shops and bars. There are some solid Biedermeier apartment blocks and on Ruprechtsplatz, in the former town hall, a kosher restaurant, the Arche Noah. Behind it is a jutting tower, the Kornhäuselturm. Named after Josef Kornhäusel, an architect from the Biedermeier period (see pp30–31), it was apparently built as a refuge from his wife.

Close to Arche Noah is Sternegasse. This street has an English-language bookshop called Shakespeare & Co (see p225) and the Neustädter-Hof, a Baroque palace built by Anton Ospel in 1734. A Turkish cannonball, fired in 1683, is embedded in its façade.



Vienna's oldest surviving synagogue, the Stadttempel, designed by Kornhäusel in the 1820s, is on Seitenstettengasse. On the same street is the headquarters of Vienna's



The Anker Clock in Hoher Markt

Jewish community. It used to house the Jewish museum, which is now located in Dorotheergasse (see p93).

Hoher Markt 27

Map 2 E5 & 6 D2.  **Stephansplatz, Schwedenplatz. Roman ruins** Tel 5355606.  9am–1pm, 2–5pm Tue–Sun.

Hoher Markt is the oldest-square in Vienna. In medieval times fish and cloth markets were held here, and

so were executions. Today it is possible to view the subterranean ruins of a former Roman garrison beneath it (see p21). Discovered after World War II, the ancient foundations show groups of houses bisected by straight roads leading to the town gates. It seems probable that they were 2nd- and 3rd-century officers' houses. The excavations are well laid out and exhibits of pottery, reliefs and tiles supplement the ruins.

In the centre of the square is the Vermählungsbrunnen (Nuptial Fountain), or Josefsbrunnen. Emperor Leopold I vowed to commemorate the safe return of his son Joseph from the Siege of Landau and commissioned Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach to design this monument, which was built by von Erlach's son Joseph Emanuel between 1729 and 1732. The fountain celebrates the betrothal of Joseph and Mary and bears figures of the high priest and the couple, with gilt urns, statues of angels, and fluted columns supporting an elaborate canopy.

Linking two office buildings on the square is the bronze and copper sculptural clock, known as the Anker Clock. Commissioned by the Anker Insurance Company, and designed by Franz Matsch, it was completed in 1914. Every hour a procession of cut-out historical figures, ranging from the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Duke Rudolf IV to Joseph Haydn, glide from one side of the clock to the other to the sound of organ music. Noon is the best time to see it, as all the figures are on display then.

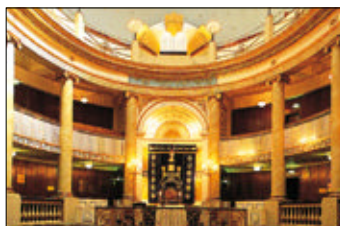
Bohemian Court Chancery 28

Judenplatz 11. **Map** 2 D5 & 5 C2. **Tel** 53122.  **Stephansplatz.**  8am–3:30pm Mon–Fri.

Habsburg rulers were also kings of Bohemia, which was governed from this magnificent palace (1709–14). Its architect was the finest of the day: Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (see p148).

VIENNA'S JEWS – PAST AND PRESENT

A Jewish community has thrived in Vienna since at least the 12th century, with Judenplatz and, later, the Stadttempel at its core. Unfortunately, the Jews' commercial success caused envy and in 1421, after a charge of ritual murder, almost the entire Jewish population was burnt to death, forcibly baptised or expelled. Thereafter Jewish fortunes fluctuated, with periods of prosperity alternating with expulsions. The 1781 Edict of Tolerance lifted legal constraints that had applied to Jews and by the late 19th century the city's cultural and intellectual life was dominated by Jews. Anti-Semitism spread in the early 20th century and burgeoning Nazism forced many Jews to leave. Of those who remained, 65,000 were murdered. In



1938 170,000 Jews lived in the city; 50 years later there were 7,000. Now Eastern European Jews are adding to the number.

The interior of the Stadttempel

Matthias Gerl enlarged the Chancery between 1751 and 1754 to accommodate the Ministry of the Interior. Its glory is the huge Baroque portals, yet the building is as subtle as it is powerful. The elegantly-curved window frames on the first floor are particularly noteworthy.

The building's interior, now a courthouse, and its two courtyards, are less impressive, partly due to reconstruction undertaken after serious bomb damage in World War II.

Altes Rathaus 29

Wipplinger Strasse 8. **Map** 2 D5 & 6 D2.
U Schwedenplatz. **Salvatorikapelle**
Tel 5337133. Mon–Thu 9am–5pm,
 or by appointment. **Austrian**
Resistance Archive **Tel** 2289469
 319. by appointment.

After the German brothers Otto and Haymo of Neuburg conspired to overthrow the Habsburgs (see p22) in 1309, their property



Ironwork at the Rathaus entrance

was confiscated and donated to the city. Over the centuries the site was expanded to form the complex of buildings that until 1883 served as the city hall or *Rathaus*.

The entrance of the Altes Rathaus is festooned with ornamental ironwork. The building is now occupied by offices and shops. The District Museum, which deals with the first municipal district of Vienna (roughly covering the area within the Ring), is also here. Of much greater interest is the Austrian Resistance Archive on the first floor, where



Portal figure
 by **Lorenzo Mattielli** in the
Bohemian Court Chancery

Austrian Resistance to Nazism is documented. Although many Austrians welcomed Hitler's takeover in 1938, a distinguished minority fiercely resisted it, and this exhibition pays tribute to them.

In one corner of the Altes Rathaus is the Andromeda Fountain. Located in the main courtyard, it was the last work by sculptor Georg Raphael Donner who designed it in 1741. The relief shows Perseus rescuing Andromeda.

At No. 5 Salvatorplatz is a late 13th-century chapel, the Salvatorikapelle, the only surviving building of the original medieval town house. It has since been enlarged and renovated, but retains its fine Gothic vaults. The walls are lined with old marble tomb slabs, some from the 15th century. Its pretty organ dates from around 1740 and is sometimes used for recitals in the chapel. On the outside wall on Salvatorgasse is an exquisite Renaissance portal dating from 1520 to 1530 – a rare example of Italianate Renaissance style.

Maria am Gestade 30

Salvatorgasse 12. **Map** 2 D5 & 5 C2.
Tel 5339594. **U** Schwedenplatz,
 Stephansplatz. 7:30am–6pm daily &
 inside at rear by appointment only. **U**

One of the city's oldest sights is this lofty, Gothic church with its 56-m high (180-ft) steeple and immense choir windows. Mentioned as early as 1158, the present building dates from the late 14th century. It was restored in the 19th century. The church has had a chequered history and during the occupation of Vienna by Napoleon in 1809 his troops used it as an arsenal.

Inside, the nave piers are enlivened with Gothic canopies sheltering statues from various periods: medieval, Baroque and modern. The choir contains two High Gothic panels (1460): they depict the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and the Coronation of the Virgin. Behind the high altar the windows contain medieval stained glass, which is patched with surviving fragments. Tucked away on the north side of the choir is a chapel with a beautiful painted stone altar from 1520. The main parts of the interior are visible from the front entrance, but to walk around inside you need to make an appointment.



Gothic canopies in the Maria am Gestade church



Holocaust memorial in Judenplatz

Judenplatz 31

Map 2 D5 & 5 C2. Stephansplatz, Herrengasse. **Museum Judenplatz**
Tel 53504310. 10am–6pm
Sun–Thu, 10am–2pm Fri.
 on main Jewish holidays.
 except to synagogue.
 free, 2pm & 5pm Thu & Sun. Take identification. www.jmw.at

Judenplatz was the site of the Jewish ghetto in medieval times. In the centre of the square stands a statue of the German playwright and critic Ephraim Lessing by Siegfried Charoux. The Nazis did not like a tribute to a writer whose works plead for toleration towards Jews, and they destroyed it in 1939. It was later redesigned by the same sculptor and reinstated in the square in 1982.

In 1996 British artist Rachel Whiteread was the controversial winner of a competition to design a monument for the Jewish victims of the Nazi regime, to be unveiled in the square on 9 November 1999, the anniversary of Kristal Nacht. A heated public debate ensued and following many changes, Judenplatz was reopened on 25 October 2000 as a place of remembrance. It now contains

Whiteread's memorial, the new Museum Judenplatz at No. 8, and the excavated remains of the medieval synagogue that lie beneath the square. The museum celebrates the vibrant Jewish quarter that was centred on the square until the expulsion of the Jews in 1421, an event gleefully recorded in an inscription, *Zum Grossen Jordan*, on the façade of No. 2. The museum also houses a public database of the 65,000 Austrian Jews killed by the Nazis and, in the basement, the excavated synagogue.

excavated synagogue.

Clock Museum 32

Schulhof 2. Map 2 D5 & 5 C2. Tel 5332265. Stephansplatz. 10am–6pm Tue–Sun. 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. www.wienmuseum.at

You don't have to be a clock fanatic to enjoy a visit to this wonderful and fascinating museum.

Located in the beautiful former Obizzi Palace (1690), the museum contains a fine collection of clocks, some of which were accumulated by an earlier curator, Rudolf Kaftan.

Others belonged to the novelist Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach.

The first floor displays the mechanisms of tower clocks from the 16th century



Lavish specimen in the Clock Museum

onwards, painted clocks, grandfather clocks and pocket watches. On the other floors are huge astronomical clocks and a wide range of novelty ones.

There are more than 3,000 exhibits. A major highlight is the astronomical clock by David Cajetano, dating from the 18th century. It has over 30 readings and dials that show, among other things, the dates of solar and lunar eclipses. Many other exhibits date from the Biedermeier and *belle époque* periods.

At every full hour the three floors of the museum resound to the incredible sound of numerous clocks striking, chiming and playing. All are carefully maintained to keep the correct time.

The museum gives its visitors a comprehensive account of the history of chronometry through the ages, and of clock technology from the 15th century through to the present day.

Kurrentgasse 33

Map 2 D5 & 5 C2. Stephansplatz. **Grimm bakery** 7am–6:30pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon Sat.

This narrow street is shaded by elegant tall Baroque houses, their lower floors filled with cosy bars and pricey Italian restaurants. It's a pleasant place to while away an afternoon. The Grimm bakery at No. 10 is one of the best in Vienna and offers an astonishing variety of breads. No. 12, a house dating from 1730, has an attractive pink cobbled courtyard filled with numerous plants and trees.



One of the many fascinating showrooms in the Clock Museum



Statue on top of No. 10 Am Hof

Kirche am Hof 34

Schulhof 1. **Map** 2 D5 & 5 C2.

Tel 5338394. *Herrengasse.*

7am–noon, 4–6pm daily.

This Catholic church, which is picturesquely dedicated to the Nine Choirs of Angels, was founded by Carmelite friars in the late 14th century. The façade, at present being renovated, was redesigned by the Italian architect Carlo Carlone in 1662 to provide space for a large balustraded balcony. The church is now used for services by Vienna's large Croatian community.

It is also worth taking a walk behind the church into Schulhofplatz to look at the tiny restored shops which snuggle happily between the buttresses of the Gothic choir.

Am Hof 35

Map 2 D5 & 5 C2.

Stephansplatz, Schottentor.

This is the largest enclosed square in Vienna. The Romans established a garrison here and, later, the Babenberg ruler Duke Heinrich II Jasomirgott built his castle close to where No. 2 Am Hof stands. In the centre of the square you can see the Mariensäule (Column of Our Lady), a monument that commemorates the end

of the threat of Swedish invasion during the Thirty Years War (see p25). Dating from 1667, it was designed by Carlo Carlone and Carlo Canevale.

There are a number of interesting houses around the square. Opposite the church is the palatial Märkleinisches Haus which was designed by Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt (see p152) in 1727. Its elegant façade was wrecked by the insertion of a fire station on the ground floor in 1935. The 16th-century red house next door is the headquarters of Johann Kattus, a producer of sparkling wine. No. 10, designed by Anton Ospel, is the Bürgerliche Zeughaus, the citizens' armoury, where the city's fire services are now permanently based. The façade is dominated by the Habsburg coat of arms and military emblems. The allegorical statues above are by Lorenzo Mattielli.

At No. 12 the bay-windowed Urbanihaus dates from the 1730s, and its iron inn sign dates from the same period. Next door is the Collalto Palace – it was here, in 1762, that Mozart made his first public appearance aged just six (see p38).

Peterskirche 36

Petersplatz 6. **Map** 2 D5 & 5 C3.

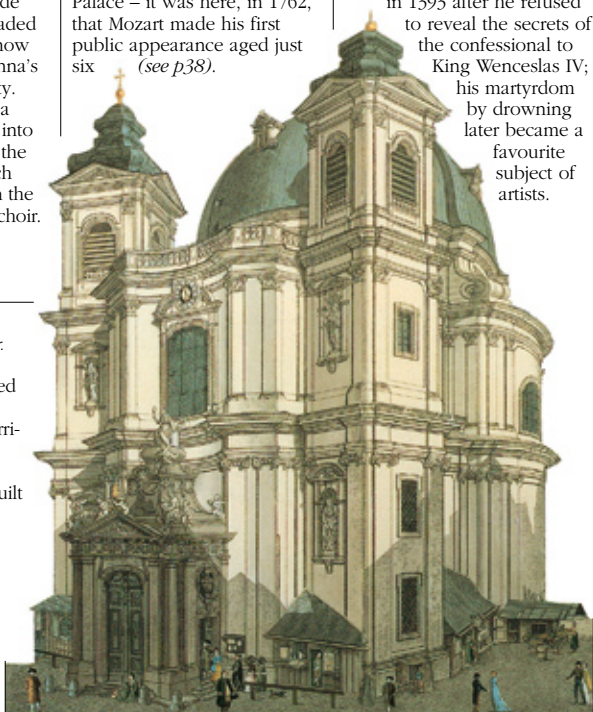
Tel 5336433. *Stephansplatz.*

7am–6pm daily.

A church has stood here since the 12th century, but the oval structure you see today dates from the early 18th century. It was modelled on St Peter's in Rome and a number of architects collaborated on the design, notably Gabriele Montani. The interior is amazingly lavish, and there's an exuberant, eye-catching pulpit (1716) by the sculptor Matthias Steindl. The richly-clothed skeletons on the right and beneath the altar are the remains of early Christian martyrs originally deposited in the catacombs in Rome. The frescoes inside the huge dome, depicting the Assumption of the Virgin, are by J M Rottmayr.

In 1729 Lorenzo Mattielli designed the sculpture of St John Nepomuk to the right of the choir. This priest earned his sainthood by being thrown into the River Vltava in Prague

in 1393 after he refused to reveal the secrets of the confessional to King Wenceslas IV; his martyrdom by drowning later became a favourite subject of artists.



18th-century engraving of Peterskirche



HOFBURG QUARTER

What began as a modest city fortress has grown over the centuries into a vast palace, the Hofburg. The palace was still expanding up until a few years before the Habsburgs fell from power in 1918. The presence of the court had a profound effect on the surrounding area. The former gardens of the palace are now



Portal detail in
Josefsplatz

the Volksgarten and Burggarten, and some of the buildings are now splendid museums. Streets such as Herrengasse and Bankgasse are lined with the palaces that the nobility built in their eagerness to be as close as possible to the centre of imperial power. This area is bustling with tourists by day, but at night it is almost deserted.

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

Streets and Squares

Bankgasse 31
Dorotheergasse 7
Graben 8
Herrengasse 13
Josefsplatz 6
Kärntner Strasse 36
Kohlmarkt 10
Michaelerplatz 1
Minoritenplatz 29
Naglergasse 12
Neuer Markt 35
Stock-im-Eisen-Platz 38

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Prunksaal 24
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Hofjagd und Rüstkammer 19
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Burggarten 21
Volksgarten 32

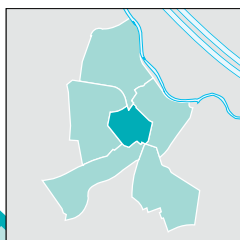
Monuments

Pestsäule 9


GETTING THERE

This area is served by the Herrengasse (line U3) U-Bahn station. Trams 1 and 2 run along the Burgring and Dr-Karl-Renner-Ring. Buses 2A and 3A run along Herrengasse and bus 1A goes from Stubentor to the Graben.

0 metres 250
0 yards 250



KEY

 Street-by-street map
See pp90-91

 U-Bahn station



Street-by-Street: Imperial Vienna

The streets around the Hofburg are no longer filled with the carriages of the nobility. Most of the palaces have become offices, embassies or apartments. Yet this district remains the most fashionable in Vienna, crammed with elegant shops, art galleries and coffee houses, which offer enjoyable interludes between visits to the many museums and churches in the area.



Mollard-Clary Palace
This mansion, built at the end of the 17th-century, has a façade designed by J L Hildebrandt 14

Herrengasse

This was a prime site for the palaces of the nobility 13

Herrengasse U-Bahn

Demel Konditorei

This Café-Konditorei offers delightful décor and exquisite pastries 11

Grosses und Kleines Michaelerhaus

Joseph Haydn (see p38) once lived in rooms overlooking the handsome courtyard of the Grosses Michaelerhaus 3

Michaelerplatz
Roman remains were recently excavated here 1

★ Loos Haus

Built in 1912, this unadorned design outraged the conservative sensibilities of the ornament-loving Archduke Franz Ferdinand (see p166) 2

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Loos Haus
- ★ Michaelerkirche
- ★ Pestsäule

KEY

--- Suggested route

0 metres 50
0 yards 50

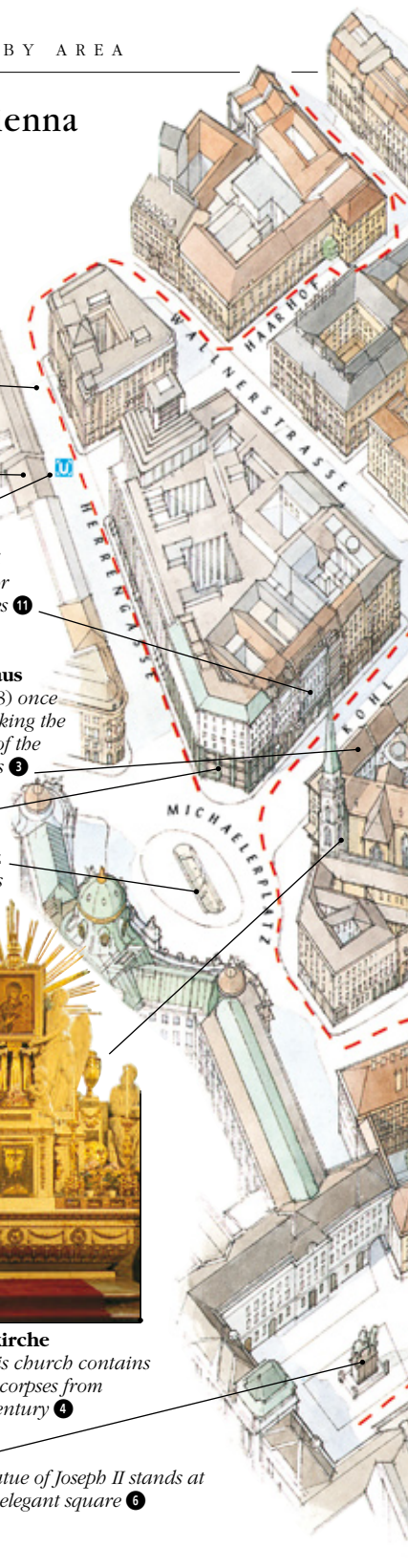


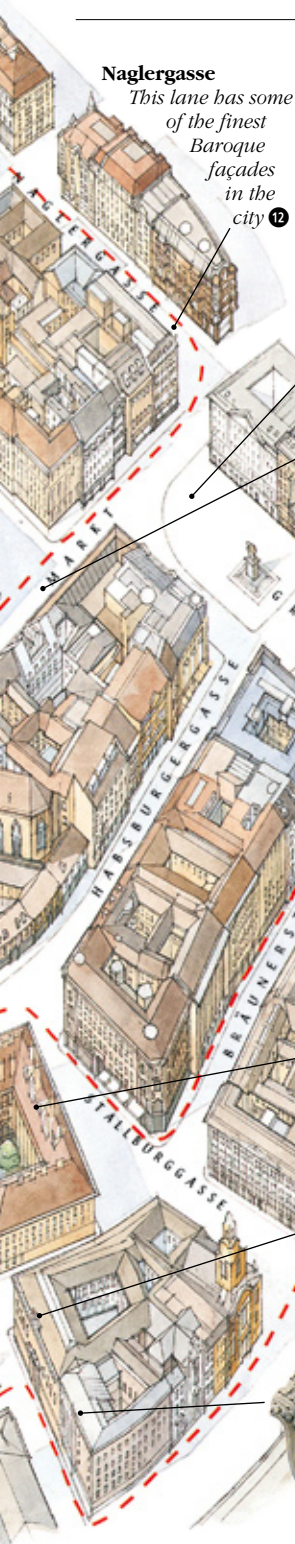
★ Michaelerkirche

The crypt of this church contains well-preserved corpses from the late 18th century 4

Josefsplatz

An equestrian statue of Joseph II stands at the centre of this elegant square 6





Naglergasse

This lane has some of the finest Baroque façades in the city **12**

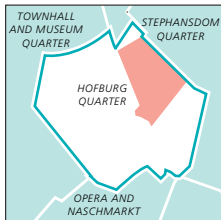


Graben

The Spar-Casse Bank, with its gilt bee on the pediment, is just one of many fine buildings on the pedestrianized Graben **8**

Kohlmarkt

This street has a number of shops by Hans Hollein, one of Austria's finest architects **10**



LOCATOR MAP

See Street Finder, maps 2 & 5



★ **Pestsäule**

Built after the plague of 1679, this is the most imposing of the Baroque plague columns **9**

Dorotheergasse

Lining this narrow lane are art galleries and auction houses, and the much-loved Café Hawelka (see p58–61) **7**

Stallburg

Once a royal residence, the Stallburg now houses the Spanish Riding School stables and the Lipizzaner Museum **5**



The Pallavicini

Palace is a late 18th-century aristocrats' palace, strategically located opposite the Hofburg.

The Palfy Palace

Built in the 16th century, it was a venue for a performance of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Michaelerplatz ①

Map 2 D5 & 5 C3. Herrengasse.

Michaelerplatz faces the grandiose entrance into the Hofburg, the Michaelertor. Opposite are the Michaelerkirche and Loos Haus. On one side of Michaelerplatz is the Michaelertrakt, commissioned by Franz Joseph in 1888 when the new Burgtheater (see pp132–33) on the Ringstrasse opened, and the original theatre dating from 1751, which occupied this site, was demolished. An old design by Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach (see p149) was used as the basis for a new design by Ferdinand Kirschner (1821–96). It was finished in 1893, complete with gilt-tasselled cupolas and statuary representing Austria's land and sea power.

Recent excavations have uncovered remains of a Roman encampment, as well as some medieval foundations.

Loos Haus ②

Michaelerplatz 3. Map 2 D5 & 5 C3. Tel 53173455.

Herrengasse.

8am–3pm

Mon–Wed & Fri,

8am–5:30pm Thu.

Erected opposite the Michaelertor in 1910–12, and designed by Adolf Loos, this building so outraged Franz Ferdinand (see p166) that he declared he would



Michaelerplatz fountain

Kohlmarkt 11 & Michaelerplatz

6. Map 2 D5 & 5 C3.

Herrengasse.

to the public.

At No. 6 Michaelerplatz a footpath leads to the Baroque Kleines Michaelerhaus (1735). Look out for a vivid painted relief of Christ on the Mount of Olives with a crucifixion

in the background (1494) on the side of the Michaelerkirche. The Baroque façade of the Grosses Michaelerhaus is at No. 11 Kohlmarkt. It has a

ADOLF LOOS

Unlike his contemporary Otto Wagner (see p57), Adolf Loos (1870–1933) loathed ornament for its own sake. Instead, he used smooth lines and exquisite interior decoration; his buildings' lack of "eye-brows" (the window hoods on many of Vienna's buildings) scandalized Viennese society. Surviving interiors include Knize (see p93), the American Bar (see p105) and the Café Museum (see p137).



never use the Michaelertor again. Today it's hard to understand why: the outside is unexceptional but the inside is a lesson in stylish elegance.

Grosses und Kleines Michaelerhaus ③

handsome courtyard and coach house. From here there is a fine view of the older parts of the Michaelerkirche. The buildings around the courtyard were erected in about 1720, and the composer Joseph Haydn (see p38) is said to have lived in an unheated attic here in 1749.

Michaelerkirche ④

Michaelerplatz 1. Map 2 D5 & 5 C3.

Tel 5338000. Herrengasse.

6:30am–6pm daily.

May–Oct: 11am, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm; Nov–Apr: 11am, 3pm.

The Michaelerkirche was once the parish church of the court. Its earliest parts were built in the 13th century, and the choir dates from 1327–40.

The Neo-Classical façade is from 1792. Its porch is topped by Baroque statues (1724–25) by Lorenzo Mattielli depicting the Fall of the Angels. Inside are Renaissance and 14th-century frescoes, and a glorious, vividly-carved organ from 1714 by Johann David Sieber. The main choir (1782), replete with tumbling cherubs and sunbursts, is by Karl Georg Merville. The altarpiece of the north choir (1755) is by Franz Anton Maulbertsch.

Off the north choir is the crypt entrance. In the 17th and 18th centuries parishioners were frequently buried beneath their church. Corpses clothed in their burial finery, well-preserved due to the constant temperature, can still be seen in open coffins.



Baroque organ (1714) in the Michaelerkirche

Stallburg 5

Reitschulgasse 2. **Map** 4 D1 & 5 C3.

📍 Stephansplatz, Herrengasse.

Lipizzaner Museum Tel 52524583.

🕒 9am–6pm daily. 📺 📺

The Stallburg was built in the mid-16th century for Archduke Maximilian. This former royal residence was later converted to stables for the Hofburg, these are ranged around a large courtyard with arcades on three storeys. The Stallburg today houses the Spanish Riding School (see pp98–9) and the Lipizzaner Museum which contains objects from the Imperial Collection, exhibits on the history of the Lipizzaner horses and works of art portraying the Spanish Riding School.

Josefsplatz 6

Augustinerstrasse. **Map** 4 D1 & 5

C4. 📍 Stephansplatz, Herrengasse.

In the centre of the Josefsplatz is an equestrian statue (1807) of Joseph II by Franz Anton Zauner. Despite his reforms, Joseph II was a true monarchist, and during the 1848 revolution (see p31) loyalists used the square as a gathering place.

Facing the Hofburg are two palaces. No. 5 is the Pallavicini Palace (1783–4), a blend of Baroque and Neo-Classical styles by Ferdinand von Hohenberg. No. 6 is the 16th-cen-

tury Palffy Palace. On the right of the Prunksaal (see p102) is the Redoutensaal. It was built from 1750–60 and was the venue for masked balls in imperial times. To the left is an extension to the library which was built a few years later. Both are by Nikolaus Pacassi, a favourite architect of Maria Theresa.

Dorotheergasse 7

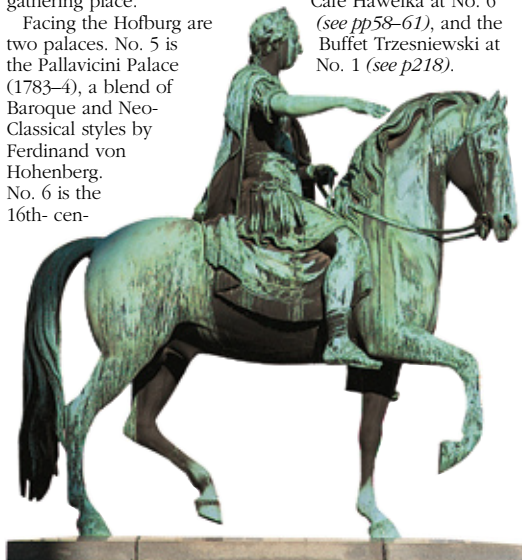
Map 4 D1 & 5 C4. 📍 Stephansplatz.

Jewish Museum Tel 5350431. 🕒

10am–6pm Mon–Wed, Fri & Sun,

10am–8pm Thu. www.jmw.at

At No. 11 of this street is the Eskeles Palace, now home to the Jewish Museum (Jüdisches Museum) which, along with its new extension in Judenplatz (see p86), chronicles the city's rich Jewish heritage. At No. 27 is the Dorotheum (see pp224–5), from the 17th century. A pawnbrokers and, more importantly, an auction house, it has branches all over Vienna. Halfway along the street is the Evangelical church (1783–4), originally by Gottlieb Nigelli. Towards the top end, close to Graben, are two immensely popular Viennese gathering places, Café Hawelka at No. 6 (see pp58–61), and the Buffet Trzesniewski at No. 1 (see p218).



Statue in Josefsplatz of Joseph II by Franz Anton Zauner (1746–1822)



Baroque plague column (Pestsäule)

Graben 8

Map 2 D5 & 5 C3. 📍 Stephansplatz.

Neidhart Fresco House 🕒 9am–

12:15pm, 1–4:30pm Tue–Sun.

Facing No. 16 of this pedestrianized street is the Joseph Fountain by Johann Martin Fischer. Further along is his identical Leopold Fountain (both 1804). No. 13, the clothing shop Knize (see p223), is by Adolf Loos. No. 10, the Ankerhaus by Otto Wagner, is topped by a studio used by Wagner himself and, in the 1980s, by Friedenschreich Hundertwasser (see p164). NO. 21 is Alois Pichl's Spar-Casse Bank from the 1830s. Just off the Graben at No. 19 Tuchlauben is the Neidhart Fresco House, containing medieval frescoes. (see pp54–7).

Pestsäule 9

Graben. **Map** 2 D5 & 5 C3.

📍 Stephansplatz.

During the plague of 1679, Emperor Leopold I vowed to commemorate Vienna's eventual deliverance. The plague over, he commissioned Matthias Rauchmiller, Lodovico Burnacini and the young Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (see p149) to build this Baroque plague column. Devised by the Jesuits, its most striking image shows a saintly figure and an angel supervising the destruction of a hag representing the plague, while above the bewigged Emperor prays.



Exterior of Schullin shop (see p223)

Kohlmarkt 10

Map 2 D5 & 5 C3. Herrengasse.

Leading directly up to the Imperial Palace, the pedestrianized Kohlmarkt is lined with some of Vienna's most exclusive shops and remarkable shopfronts. No. 9, the Jugendstil Artaria Haus (1901), was the work of Max Fabiani (1865–1962), a protégé of Otto Wagner (see p57). No.16, the bookshop and publishers Manz, boasts a characteristic portal from 1912 by Adolf Loos (see p92). The striking abstract shopfront of jewelers Schullin (1982) was designed by the architect Hans Hollein (see p91).

Demel Konditorei 11

Kohlmarkt 14. Map 2 D5 & 5 C3.
Tel 53517170. Stephansplatz.
 10am–7pm daily.

This famous pastry shop at No. 14 Kohlmarkt still bears its imperial patent – K.u.k. Hof-Zuckerbäcker – proudly lettered above the shopfront.



Inside the ornately-decorated Demel Konditorei

The pastry shop was founded in Michaelerplatz in 1785 and acquired by the pâtissier Christoph Demel in 1857, before moving to its present site on Kohlmarkt in 1888. Its many small rooms are in an ornate late 19th-century style.

Naglergasse 12

Map 2 D5 & 5 C2. Herrengasse.

During the Middle Ages needle-makers had their shops here, which is how the street acquired its name. This narrow lane also follows the line of a wall that used to stand here in Roman times. Today Naglergasse is lined with a succession of gorgeous Baroque houses. The delightful Renaissance bay window of No. 19 is ornamented with carved cherubs. No. 13 dates from the 16th century but has been considerably altered since. No. 21 (1720) is now an inn with a particularly snug and cosy interior.

Herrengasse 13

Map 2 D5 & 5 B2. Herrengasse.

Flanking the Hofburg, this street was the prime location for the palaces of the Habsburg nobility. In 1843 a visiting writer, J G Kohl, wrote of the street's "silent palaces", and today little has changed.

The base of the provincial government of Lower Austria, the Landhaus, is at No. 13; the façade of the present building dates from the 1830s.

In the courtyard a tablet from 1571 warns visitors not to carry weapons or to fight here. The injunction was famously ignored when the 1848 Revolution (see p31) was ignited on this very spot.

The long, low Neo-Classical façade of No. 7 received its present appearance from Ludwig Pichl and Giacomo Quarenghi in 1811. At No. 5 Anton Ospele (1677–1756) gave the Wilczek Palace (built before 1737) an original façade, with angled pilasters lending the central bays an illusion of perspective.



Coat of arms in the courtyard of the Mollard-Clary Palace

Mollard-Clary Palace 14

Herrengasse 9. Map 2 D5 & 5 B3.
Tel 53410710. Herrengasse.
 Globe Museum 10am–2pm Mon, Wed, Fri; 3pm–7pm Thu.

At No. 9 Herrengasse is the former Mollard-Clary Palace, a mansion constructed by Domenico Martinelli in 1698. The façade was the first commission for Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt (see p152).

From 1923 until 1997 the palace housed the Lower Austrian Provincial Museum, or Landesmuseum. Today the building houses offices and the Globe Museum.


In the courtyard is a 16th-century elaborate wrought-iron well cover and a carved stone coat of arms (1454).

Hofburg Complex 15

See pp96–101.

Neue Burg 16

Heldenplatz. **Map** 4 D1 & 5 B4.

Tel 52524484.  Volkstheater, Herrengasse. **Tram** 1, 2, D, J.

 10am–6pm Mon, Wed–Sun.

 www.khm.at

The Neue Burg, a massive curved building situated on Heldenplatz, was added to the Hofburg Complex in 1881–1913. It embodies the last gasp of the Habsburg Empire as it strained under aspirations of independence from its domains, when the personal prestige of Emperor Franz Joseph was all that seemed able to keep it intact. It was not the perfect moment to embark on an extension to the Hofburg, but the work was undertaken nevertheless, and the Neue Burg was built to designs by the Ringstrasse architects Karl von Hasenauer (1833–94) and Gottfried Semper (1803–79). Five years after its completion, the Habsburg empire ended.

In 1938, Adolf Hitler stood on the terraced central bay to proclaim the Anschluss – the union of Austria and Germany – to tens of thousands of Viennese (see p.36).

Today the Neue Burg is home to the reading room of the National Library, as well as a number of museums (see following entries).

Ephesos Museum 17

As Neue Burg. **Tel** 52524484.

 10am–6pm Mon, Wed–Sun.

www.khm.at

For decades Austrian archaeologists have been excavating the Greek and Roman site of Ephesus in Turkey. Since 1978 their discoveries have been on display in the main block of the Neue Burg. Also on show are finds from the Greek island of Samothrace, excavated in the 1870s. The main exhibits include a colossal frieze commemorating Lucius Verus's victory over the Parthians in AD 165, and many architectural fragments.



Armour at Hofjagd und Rüstkammer

Sammlung Alter Musikinstrumente 18

As Neue Burg.

Pianos that belonged to Beethoven, Schubert and Haydn, among countless other items, are housed in the musical instrument museum. More important, however, is the collection of Renaissance instruments, widely believed to be the finest in the world. The claviorgan (1596), the oldest surviving example of this instrument, is particularly fascinating, and features stops used to create special effects such as birdsong.



Renaissance cittern from the Sammlung Alter Musikinstrumente

Hofjagd und Rüstkammer 19


As Neue Burg.

The Hofburg's weapons collection is impressive both for its size and for the workmanship of its finest items: ivory and filigree inlay on weapons, medieval ceremonial saddles and jewelled Turkish and Syrian maces. Particularly resplendent are the 16th-century ceremonial suits worn by the Habsburgs for tournaments and military parades, and the decorative fighting and hunting weapons.

The museum was based on the personal armouries of the Habsburg emperors and, not surprisingly, houses one of the finest collections in Europe.

Völkerkundemuseum 20

As Neue Burg. **Tel** 534300.

 10am–6pm Mon, Wed–Sun.

www.ethno.museum.ac.at

Ranged around an arcaded Italian Renaissance-style courtyard, at the west end of the Neue Burg, is the ethnological museum. To one side are the Oriental collections: lacquer screens, clothes, furniture, weapons, ceramics, farm tools, masks and musical instruments. In a neighbouring room are African figurines and masks. The artefacts from Benin are the highlight of the African collection. Australasia and Polynesia dominate the displays upstairs, with fabrics from Bali, weapons from Borneo and many musical instruments from the Far East.

The large pre-Columbian collection from Mexico includes an Aztec feather headdress. A recent addition to the permanent collection is a section on Eskimo culture.

The Hofburg Complex 15

The vast Hofburg Complex contains the former imperial apartments, several museums, a chapel, a church, the Austrian National Library, the Winter Riding School and the President of Austria's offices. It was the seat of Austrian power for over six centuries, and successive rulers were all anxious to leave their mark. Seven centuries of architectural development can be seen in the 10 or so buildings, ranging from Gothic to late 19th-century historicism.



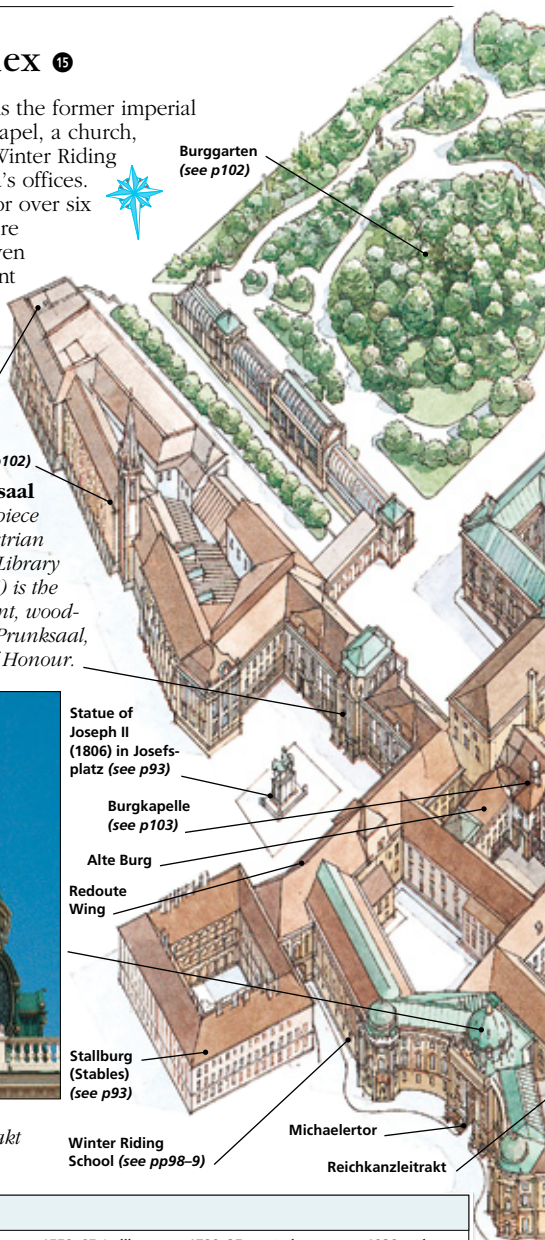
Albertina (see p102)

Augustinerkirche (see p102)

★ **Prunksaal**
The showpiece of the Austrian National Library (1722–35) is the flamboyant, wood-paneled Prunksaal, or Hall of Honour.



★ **Michaelertrakt (1893)**
The curved façade of the Michaelertrakt is surmounted by an imposing dome.



TIMELINE

1275 First fort built on site of the Schweizerhof



Statue of the angel Gabriel in the Burgkapelle

1558–65 Stallburg built – a Renaissance palace, later a mews

1575–1611 Amalienburg built

1729–35 JE Fischer von Erlach's Winter Riding School built

1881–1913 Neue Burg built

1938 Hitler proclaims annexation of Austria from the Neue Burg

1300

1447–9 Alterations carried out on the Burgkapelle under Friedrich III

1500

1547–52 Ferdinand I reconstructs the Alte Burg

1552–3 Schweizertrakt built

1660–80 Leopoldinischertrakt built under Leopold I

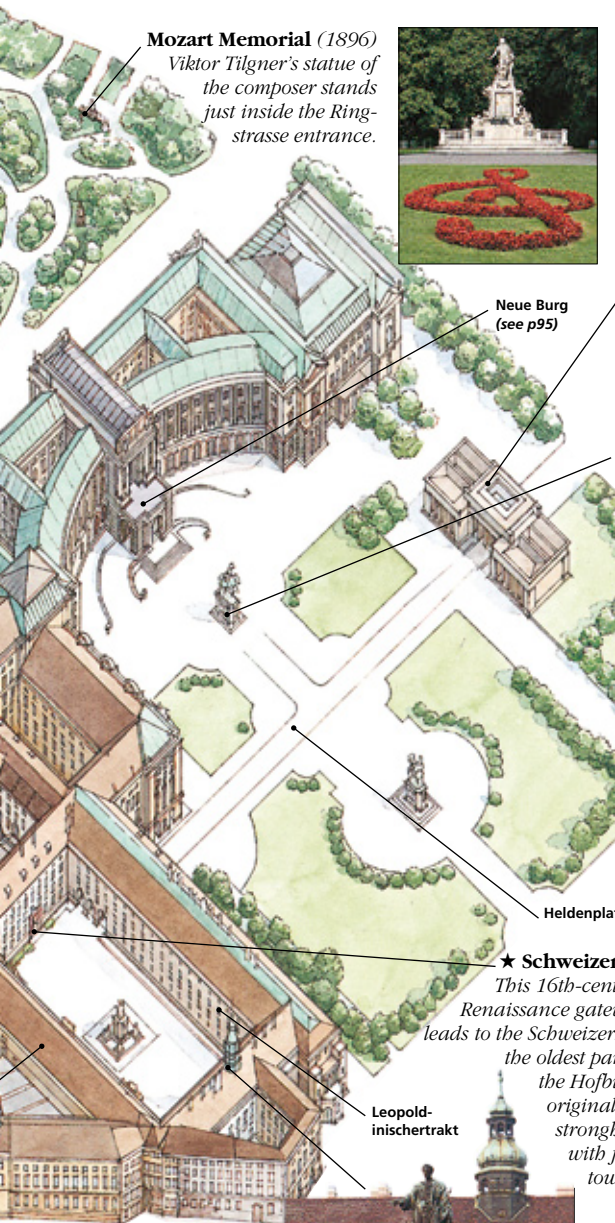
1700

1728 Work begun on JE Fischer von Erlach's Reichkanzleitrakt

1889–93 Construction of Michaelertrakt and Michaelertor

1900

1992 The banqueting hall and ballroom in the Redoute Wing destroyed by fire



Mozart Memorial (1896)
Viktor Tilgner's statue of the composer stands just inside the Ringstrasse entrance.



Neue Burg (see p95)

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Michaelerplatz 1, A-1010.

Map 4 D1 & 5 B4.

Stephansplatz, Herrergasse.

2A to Heldenplatz, 3A to Michaelerplatz. D, J, 1. For opening times of individual museums, see pp92–105.

Burgtor or outer gate was built to a design by Peter Nobile in 1821–4.



★ **Prince Eugene Statue**

Anton Dominik Fernkorn designed this monument of Prince Eugene (1865). The pedestal is by Eduard van der Nüll.

Heldenplatz

★ **Schweizertor**

This 16th-century Renaissance gateway leads to the Schweizerhof, the oldest part of the Hofburg, originally a stronghold with four towers.



Leopoldinischertrakt



Amalienburg
The oddly-shaped Amalienburg, built in 1575 for emperor Maximilian's son Rudolf, has a Renaissance façade and an attractive Baroque clock tower.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Prunksaal
- ★ Prince Eugene Statue
- ★ Schweizertor
- ★ Michaelertrakt

Winter Riding School 26

The origins of the Spanish Riding School are obscure, but it is believed to have been founded in 1572 to cultivate the classic skills of *haute école* horsemanship. By breeding and training horses from Spain, the Habsburgs formed the Spanische Reitschule. Today, 80-minute shows take place in the building known as the Winter Riding School. Commissioned by Karl VI, it was built from 1729 to 1735 to a design by Josef Emanuel Fischer von Erlach. There are two entrances to the building – one from door 2, Josefsplatz, the other from the Michaelerkuppel.

Specially-bred Lipizzaner stallions are trained from the age of three.

The black bicorne hat has a gold braid stripe from the upper left to the lower centre.

Jackets are coffee-coloured – waisted, double-breasted and with two rows of brass buttons.

Buckskin jodhpurs are worn.

Pale leather gloves are worn.

Long boots covering the knees are part of the uniform.



Tack

The elegant saddle with embroidered cloth differs from modern versions and complements the historical dress of the riders; the curb rein is generally used.

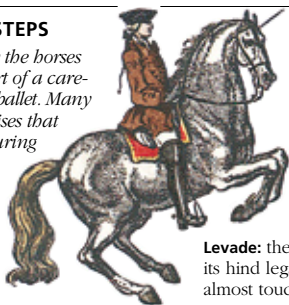
Stables

The three storey-high Renaissance former palace of the Stallburg is across the road from the Winter Riding School. It is now home to the Lipizzaner Museum (see p93) as well as providing stabling for the horses.

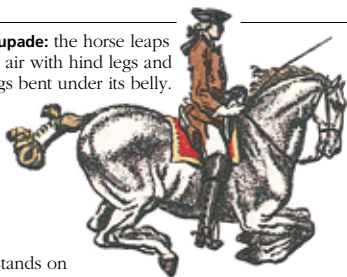


THE HORSES' STEPS

The steps made by the horses and riders are part of a carefully orchestrated ballet. Many derive from exercises that were developed during the Renaissance period by cavalrymen, who needed agile horses capable of special manoeuvres.



The Croupade: the horse leaps into the air with hind legs and forelegs bent under its belly.



Levade: the horse stands on its hind legs with hocks almost touching the ground.



Interior of the Winter Riding School

The gracious interior is lined with 46 columns and adorned with elaborate plasterwork, chandeliers and a coffered ceiling. At the head of the arena is the court box. Spectators sit here or watch from upper galleries.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

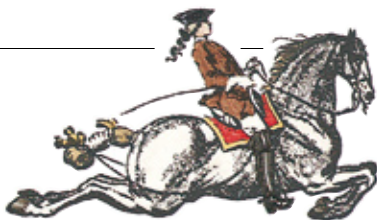
Michaelerplatz 1, A-1010. **Map** 5 C3. **Tel** 5339031. Herrengasse. 3A to Habsburgergasse, 2A to Michaelerplatz. for performances. 1 Jan, 6 Jan, 1 May, Ascension Day, Corpus Christi, 15 Aug, 26 Oct, 1 Nov, 8 Dec, 25–26 Dec (dates do vary). some areas. **www.srs.at**

Portrait of Karl VI

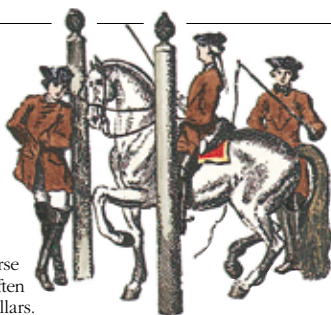
An equestrian portrait of Emperor Karl VI who commissioned the building, hangs in the royal box. Whenever a rider enters the hall, he must express his respect to the founder of the school by raising his bicorne hat to the portrait.

THE LIPIZZANER HORSES

The stallions that perform their athletic feats on the sawdust of the Winter Riding School take their name from the stud at Lipizza near Trieste in Slovenia (see below), which was founded by Archduke Karl in 1580. Today the horses are bred on the Austrian National Stud Farm at Piber near Graz. The breed was originally produced by crossing Arab, Berber and Spanish horses. The horses are renowned for their grace and stamina. You may be able to obtain a ticket without a reservation to see them at their morning training session.



Capriole: this is a leap into the air with a simultaneous kick of the hind legs.



The Piaffe: the horse trots on the spot, often between two pillars.

State Apartments and Treasuries 27

The state apartments in the Reichskanzleitrakt (1723–30) and the Amalienburg (1575) include the rooms occupied by Franz Joseph from 1857 to 1916, Empress Elisabeth's apartments from 1854 to 1898 and the rooms where Tsar Alexander I lived during the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The sacred and secular treasures amassed during centuries of Habsburg rule are displayed in 21 rooms. They include relics of the Holy Roman Empire, the crown jewels and liturgical objects of the imperial court.

Emperor Maximilian I

(around 1500)

This portrait by Bernhard Strigel hangs in the room containing Burgundian treasure. Emperor Maximilian married Mary, Duchess of Burgundy in 1477.



Cradle of the King of Rome

Designed by the French painter Prud'hon, Maria Louisa gave this cradle to her son, the King of Rome (see p175).

STAR FEATURES

★ 10th-Century Crown

★ Imperial Dining Hall

★ Empress Elisabeth by Franz Xaver Winterhalter

KEY

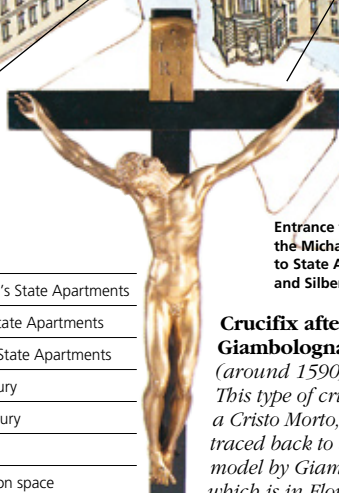
- Franz Joseph's State Apartments
- Elisabeth's State Apartments
- Alexander's State Apartments
- Sacred Treasury
- Secular Treasury
- Sisi Museum
- Non-exhibition space



Entrance to Treasuries

★ 10th-Century Crown

The insignia of the Holy Roman Empire includes this crown set with enamel plaques and cabochons.



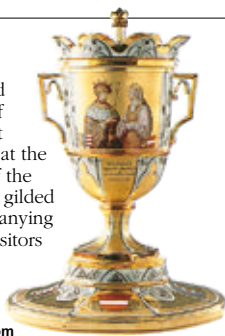
Entrance through the Michaelerkuppel to State Apartments and Silberkammer

Crucifix after Giambologna

(around 1590)
This type of crucifix, a Cristo Morto, can be traced back to a similar model by Giambologna which is in Florence.

THE SILBERKAMMER

On display in the ground-floor rooms of the court tableware and silver depot is a dazzling array of items – gold, silver and the finest porcelain – that were once used at the Habsburg state banquets. One of the highlights is a 33-m long (100-ft) gilded bronze centrepiece with accompanying candelabra from around 1800. Visitors can also admire the mid-18th-century Sèvres dinner service that was a diplomatic gift from Louis XV to Maria Theresa.



Goblet from the Laxenburg Service (around 1821)

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Map 4 D1 & 5 B3. **State Apartments (Kaiserappartements), Sisi Museum & Silberkammer**

Michaelerkuppel. **Tel** 5337570.

☐ 9am–5pm daily.

Sat & Sun. **www.hofburg-wien.at**

Secular & Sacred Treasuries (Schatzkammer)

Schweizerhof. **Tel** 525240.

☐ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon; 24

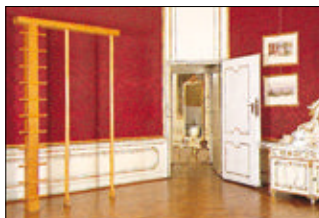
Dec: to 1pm; 31 Dec: to 3pm.

☐ 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.

www.khm.at

Elisabeth's Gymnastic Equipment

The Empress was a fitness enthusiast, and the bars at which she exercised are still in place in her dressing room.



Passage to Neue Burg and Heldenplatz

Sisi Museum

Ticket office

Entrance through the Kaisertor to State Apartments and Silberkammer

Exit from apartments



★ Imperial Dining Hall

The table is laid as it used to be in Emperor Franz Joseph's day (see p32–3), in the room where the Imperial family used to dine.

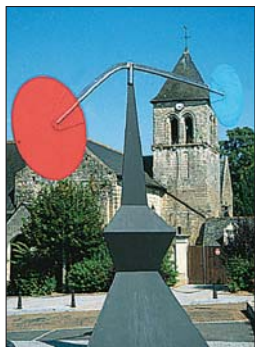


GUIDE TO TREASURES

Entering the Secular Treasury, Rooms 1–8 contain items from the Austrian Empire (with Room 5 commemorating Napoleon). Rooms 9–12 exhibit treasures from the Holy Roman Empire, while the Burgundian Inheritance is displayed in Rooms 13–16. Rooms I–V, furthest from the entrance, house the Sacred Treasury. (There is one route through the State Apartments, starting with Franz Joseph's rooms.)

★ Empress Elisabeth

Winterhalter's portrait of the Empress (1865) with stars in her hair hangs in the Sisi Museum.



Mobile by Alexander Calder (1898–1976) in Saché

Saché 10

Road map D3. 880. Azay-le-Rideau, then taxi. Azay-le-Rideau (02 47 45 44 40).

The pretty village of Saché is notable for having been second home to both a writer and an artist of world fame: the 19th-century novelist Honoré de Balzac and the 20th-century American sculptor Alexander Calder, one of whose mobiles adorns the main square.

Admirers of the work of Balzac make pilgrimages to the **Château de Saché**. The plain but comfortable manor house, built in the 16th and 18th centuries, was a quiet place to work and a source of inspiration for many of the writer's best-known novels. The house has been well restored – one of the reception rooms has even been redecorated with a copy of the

bright green wallpaper with a Pompeian frieze that was there in Balzac's day.

It is full of busts, sketches and memorabilia of the great man, including the coffee pot that kept him going during his long stints of writing. There are manuscripts and letters, as well as portraits of the women in Balzac's life: his pretty, but casual, mother; his first love, Madame de Berny; and his loyal friend, Madame Hanska, whom he finally married shortly before his death in 1850.

Château de Saché

Tel 02 47 26 86 50. daily. Tue (Oct–Mar); 1 Jan, 25 Dec.

Villaines-les-Rochers 11

Road map D3. 930. Azay-le-Rideau, then taxi. Azay-le-Rideau (02 47 45 44 40).

Since the Middle Ages, willows from the local river valleys have been made into baskets in this peaceful town. Production has been on a more substantial scale since the mid-19th century, when the local priest organized the craftsmen into one of France's first cooperatives. Everything is still hand made by the many wickerworkers (*vanniers*) in the town. This explains the relatively high prices of the attractive furniture and baskets on sale in the **cooperative's** shop. Craftsmen and women can be watched at work in

the adjoining studio. In the summer, you can also visit a small museum with displays on the subject of basket-making, the **Musée de l'Osier et de la Vannerie**.

Coopérative de Vannerie de Villaines

1 rue de la Cheneillère. **Tel** 02 47 45 43 03. daily (Sat, Sun: no work in progress). 1 Jan, 25 Dec.

Musée de l'Osier et de la Vannerie

22 rue des Caves-Fortes. **Tel** 02 47 45 23 19. May–Sep: Tue–Sun, pm only; Oct–Apr: groups by appt.



A wickerworker in Villaines

Richelieu 12

Road map D4. 2,200. Chinon, then bus. 7 pl Louis-XIII (02 47 58 13 62). Mon, Fri. www.cc-richelieu.com

It would be difficult to find a better example of 17th-century urban planning than the town of Richelieu, on the border between Touraine and Poitou. Its rigid design was the brainchild of Armand Jean du Plessis who, as Cardinal Richelieu and chief minister, was the most powerful man in the kingdom, not excepting his monarch, Louis XIII.

The Cardinal was determined to build a huge palace near his modest family estate of Richelieu. In 1625 he commissioned the architect Jacques Lemercier to draw up the plans and, in 1631, he received permission from the king to proceed, not only with the palace, but also with the creation of a new walled

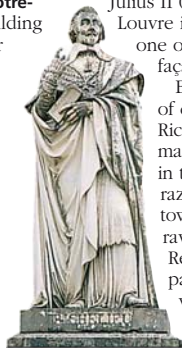


The Château de Saché, often visited by Honoré de Balzac

town. Lemercier had already designed the Palais Royal and the Church of the Sorbonne in Paris, and would later be appointed chief royal architect. His brothers, Pierre and Nicolas, were put in charge of the building work, which kept nearly 2,000 labourers busy for more than a decade.

The resulting town is a huge rectangle, surrounded by walls and moats (mostly taken up with gardens today) and entered through three monumental gates. The Grande Rue, running from north to south through the centre of the town and linking two large squares, is lined with identical Classical mansions. In the south square, place du Marché, the buildings include the Classical **Eglise Notre-Dame**, the market building with its superb timber framework, and the former law courts, in which the **Hôtel de Ville** (town hall) and a small **history museum** are now housed. In the north square, the place des Religieuses, stands a convent and the Royal Academy, founded by Richelieu in 1640.

Richelieu clearly intended that his palace should be incomparably luxurious, and that vision was impressively realized. It was filled with priceless furniture and works of art, including paintings by



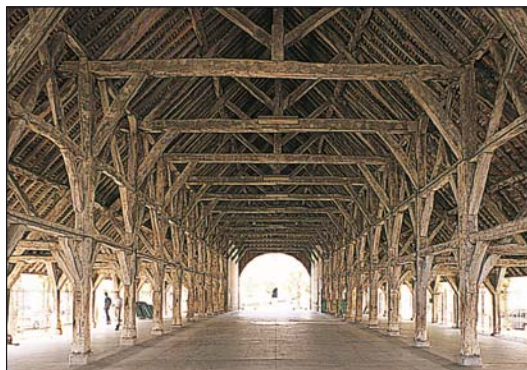
Cardinal Richelieu
(1585–1642)

Caravaggio and Andrea Mantegna. Michelangelo's *Dying Slaves*, statues that were originally designed for the tomb of Pope

Julius II (now housed in the Louvre in Paris), adorned one of the courtyard facades.

Extremely fearful of competition, Richelieu ordered many of the châteaux in the area to be razed. While his town survived the ravages of the French Revolution intact, the palace, ironically, was confiscated, damaged and then dismantled. Today, only a few garden buildings remain intact,

scattered around the 475-ha (1,174-acre) **Domaine du Parc de Richelieu**, though visitors can get an inkling of its former glory from the



Richelieu's timber-framed market hall

virtual presentation, **Visite en 3D du Château de Richelieu** (Tel: 02 47 98 48 70), which takes place at 28 Grand Rue.

M Musée de l'Hôtel de Ville
place du Marché. **Tel** 02 47 58 10 13. Mon, Wed–Fri (Jul & Aug: daily). public hols.
Domaine du Parc de Richelieu
5 pl du Cardinal. **Tel** 02 47 58 10 09. Wed–Mon (May–Sep: daily). restricted.

Environs

Champigny-sur-Veude, 6 km (4 miles) to the north of Richelieu, was one of the châteaux demolished on Richelieu's orders. All that is left is the Renaissance church of **Ste-Chapelle**, with its superb stained glass.

Ste-Chapelle
Champigny-sur-Veude. **Tel** 02 47 95 73 48. May: Sat & Sun pm; Jun: Wed–Sun pm; Jul & Aug: daily (am only Sat & Sun); Sep: Sat–Thu pm.

BALZAC AT SACHÉ

Honoré de Balzac's (1799–1850) regular stays at the Château de Saché between 1829 and 1837 coincided with the most productive period in his highly industrious career as a writer. Here, hidden well away from his creditors, he would work at least 12 hours a day. Despite starting in the early hours of the morning, he remained able to entertain his hosts, Monsieur and Madame de Margonne, and their guests in the evenings by reading aloud the latest chunk of text from his novels, acting out all the characters as he did so.

Two of Balzac's major novels, *Le Père Goriot* (*Father Goriot*) and *Le Lys dans la Vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*), were written at Saché. The latter is set in the Indre valley, which can be seen from the house and does indeed have something of that "intangibly mysterious quality" to which Balzac refers with typical eloquence.



Balzac's bedroom at Saché

Le Grand-Pressigny 13

Road map D4. 1,200.

Châtellerault, then taxi.

Tours. 1 pl de Savoir Villars (02 47 94 96 82) Thu.

Perched high above the hilly streets of the town, the **Château du Grand-Pressigny** has lovely views over the peaceful Claise and Aigronne valleys.

The château is part medieval ruins, part 15th-century castle and part Renaissance residence. The rectangular, 12th-century ruined keep contrasts dramatically with the elegant 16th-century Italianate wing.

Important prehistoric finds have been made in the area, and various excavations have revealed that the site was a key centre for the large-scale production of flint implements, such as blades, which were then exported as far afield as Switzerland and even Great Britain.

Many of these finds will be on display again soon at the new **Musée de la Préhistoire**, which is being built in the château ruins and scheduled for opening in 2008. The collection includes examples of tools and other objects from all the prehistoric eras, along with rock flints, large blocks of obsidian and multi-coloured jasper. Particularly impressive are the yellowish flint blocks known familiarly as “pounds of butter”. The museum is also home to an important collection of fossils, some of which date

back 60 million years. During these works, the château will be closed, although it will still be possible to visit one of the courtyards and admire the views.

On summer afternoons you can visit the **Archéolab**, 6 km (4 miles) northwest at Abilly-sur-Claise, where a transparent dome covers a site inhabited by stone cutters between 2800 and 2400 BC.

Château du Grand-Pressigny

Tel 02 47 94 90 20. Gardens Tue–Sun (Jul & Aug: daily).

Archéolab

Abilly-sur-Claise. Tel 02 47 59 80 82 or 02 47 91 07 48. mid-Jun–mid-Sep: daily, pm only.



Neolithic tool from the Musée de la Préhistoire

Loches 14

Road map D3. 7,000.

1 pl de la Marnie (02 47 91 82 82).

Wed, Sat. www.loches-tourainecotesud.com

Its medieval streets lined with picturesque houses, the peaceful town of Loches lies beside the River Indre on the edge of the Forêt de Loches. Thanks to its strategic location, it became an impor-



Agnès Sorel as the Virgin, painted by Jehan Fouquet

tant citadel in the Middle Ages, with an 11th-century keep begun by Foulques Nerra (see p50). The **château** remained in the hands of the counts of Anjou until 1194, when John Lackland gave it to King Philippe Augustus. John's brother, Richard the Lionheart, recaptured Loches in a surprise attack in 1195. It took Philippe Augustus nearly ten years to retake the castle by force, and eventually it became a French royal residence. It was in the 15th-century **Logis Royal** that Joan of Arc, fresh from her Orléans triumph, persuaded the dauphin to travel to Rheims and be crowned king of France as Charles VII. This key event is commemorated in the tapestry-hung Salle Jeanne d'Arc.

Also in the Logis Royal is the tiny, late Gothic private chapel of twice-queen Anne of Brittany, whose ermine tail emblem recurs in the decoration. Also on show in the château are a fine *Crucifixion* triptych by Tours painter Jehan Fouquet (c.1420–80) or one of his pupils, and a copy of his colourful *Virgin with Child*, which was modelled on Agnès Sorel, another woman of influence in Charles VII's life.

The massive keep with its surrounding towers is famous for its torture chambers. Prisoners are said to have been locked for years into small wood-and-iron cages. One of the most famous was Lodovico Sforza, the duke of Milan, who died as a prisoner in the **Tour Martelet**, where



Renaissance façade of the Gallery, Château de Grand-Pressigny

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp203–4 and pp215–16

the tempera wall paintings he made can still be seen.

Beside the château is the Collégiale St-Ours, a church with four pyramid-like spires and a Romanesque portal. Inside is the Gothic marble tomb of Agnès Sorel. The famous beauty is shown with lambs resting at her feet.

Near the Porte Royale lies the **Maison Lansyer**, the birthplace of the 19th-century painter Emmanuel Lansyer. Some of his canvases are on display, along with his collection of Japanese armour and prints. It also houses a folklore museum, exhibiting typical 19th-century interiors.

🏰 Château de Loches

Tel Logis Royal 02 47 59 01 32;

Donjon 02 47 59 07 86. 🕒 daily.

🗓️ 1 Jan, 25 Dec. 🎭 🎪 Spectacle Nocturne (Aug), phone tourist office to make a reservation.

🏠 Maison Lansyer

1 rue Lansyer. **Tel** 02 47 59 05 45.

🕒 Apr–Oct & school hols: daily. 🎨

Montrésor 📍

Road map E3. 🏰 415. 🏡 Loches, then taxi. 🏠 Maison du Pays (02 47 92 70 71).

The turreted **Château de Montrésor**, largely built in the 15th and 16th centuries, stands on the site of medieval fortifications built by Count Foulques Nerra (see p50). It was bought in the mid-19th century by Count Branicki, an émigré Polish financier closely linked to the future Napoleon III. Still owned by Branicki's descendants, the château's Second Empire decor remains virtually unaltered.

As well as a fine collection of early Italian paintings and some elegant portraits, there are many gold and silver pieces. The rooms, with their mounted stags' and wolves' heads and dark panelling, retain a somewhat Central European feel. The château terrace and informal gardens offer fine views of the river.

An estate building, which used to house the château's wine press, has been converted into the Maison du Pays, an information centre

and showcase for the Indrois Valley and its products.

The village's small Gothic and Renaissance church was built by Imbert de Bastarnay, lord of Montrésor, adviser to François I and grandfather of Diane de Poitiers (see p108). On the beautiful marble Bastarnay tomb lie *gisants* (effigies) of the lord, his lady and their son, guarded by angels and their feet resting on greyhounds. The tomb, believed to be the work of the Renaissance sculptor Jean Goujon (c.1510–68), is decorated with statues of the apostles. There are also some wonderful Flemish and Italian paintings in the church, and a 17th-century *Annunciation* by Philippe de Champaigne (1602–74), the Baroque painter who worked on the Luxembourg palace in Paris with Nicolas Poussin.

In a lovely forest setting, 4 km (2½ miles) west of the village of Montrésor, are the ruins of the **Chartreuse du Liget**, a Carthusian monastery founded by the Plantagenet king Henry II of England in



Farm buildings and poppy fields near the village of Montrésor

expiation for the murder of Archbishop Thomas à Becket. The nearby Chapel of **St-Jean-du-Liget** is decorated with 12th-century frescoes.

🏰 Château de Montrésor

Tel 02 47 92 60 04. 🕒 Apr–Oct:

daily. 🎨 🎪 🚶 park and grd fir only.

🏠 Chapelle St-Jean-du-Liget

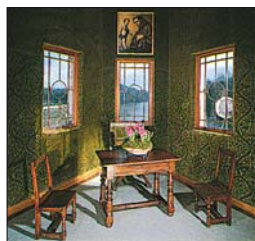
Tel 02 47 92 60 02 (Chartreuse du Liget). 🕒 phone first. 🚶



Château de Montrésor, built on medieval fortifications

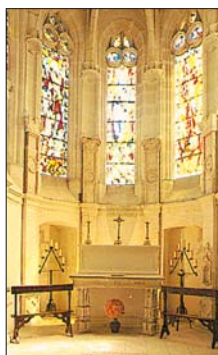
Château de Chenonceau 16

Chenonceau, stretching romantically across the River Cher, is considered by many the loveliest of the Loire châteaux. Surrounded by formal gardens and wooded grounds, this pure Renaissance building was transformed over the centuries from a modest manor into a palace designed solely for pleasure. Visitors can wander freely through the beautifully furnished rooms, using a multilingual iPod as a guide. A small wax-works museum illustrates the château's history, and the site also includes a restaurant in the old stables and a miniature train ride down the lovely tree-lined drive. Wines from Chenonceau's own vineyards are on sale.



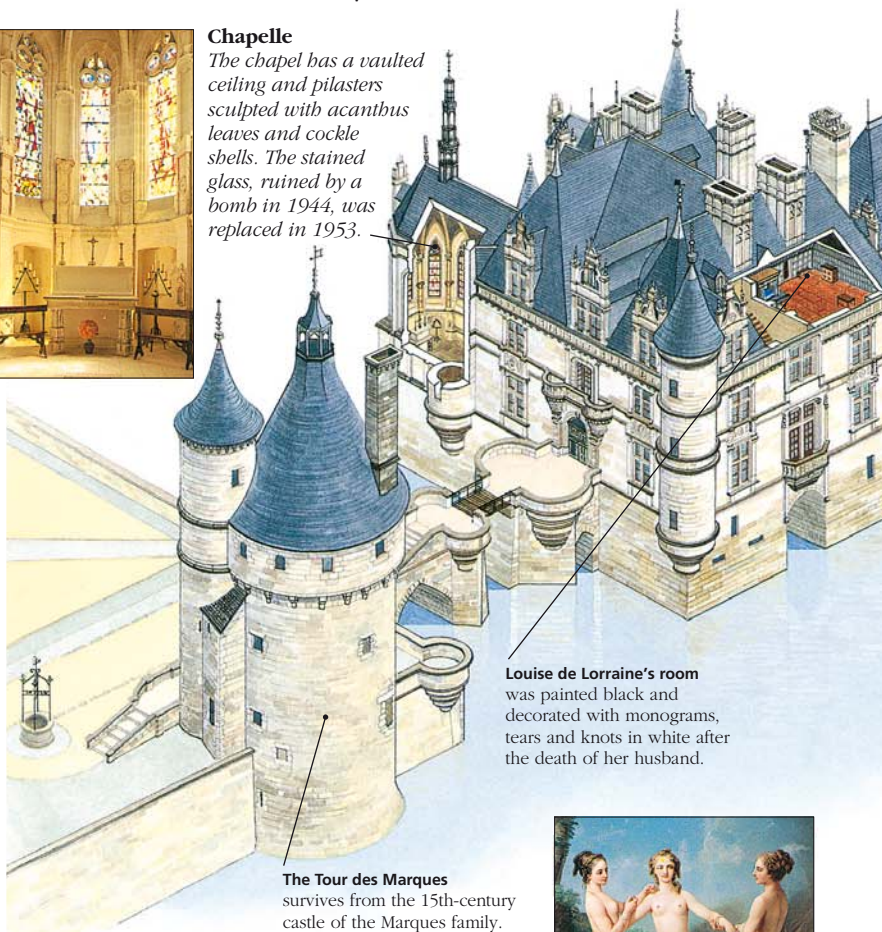
★ Cabinet Vert

The walls of Catherine de Médicis' study were originally covered with green velvet.



Chapelle

The chapel has a vaulted ceiling and pilasters sculpted with acanthus leaves and cockle shells. The stained glass, ruined by a bomb in 1944, was replaced in 1953.



Louise de Lorraine's room was painted black and decorated with monograms, tears and knots in white after the death of her husband.

The Tour des Marques survives from the 15th-century castle of the Marques family.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Cabinet Vert
- ★ Grande Galerie
- ★ Formal Gardens

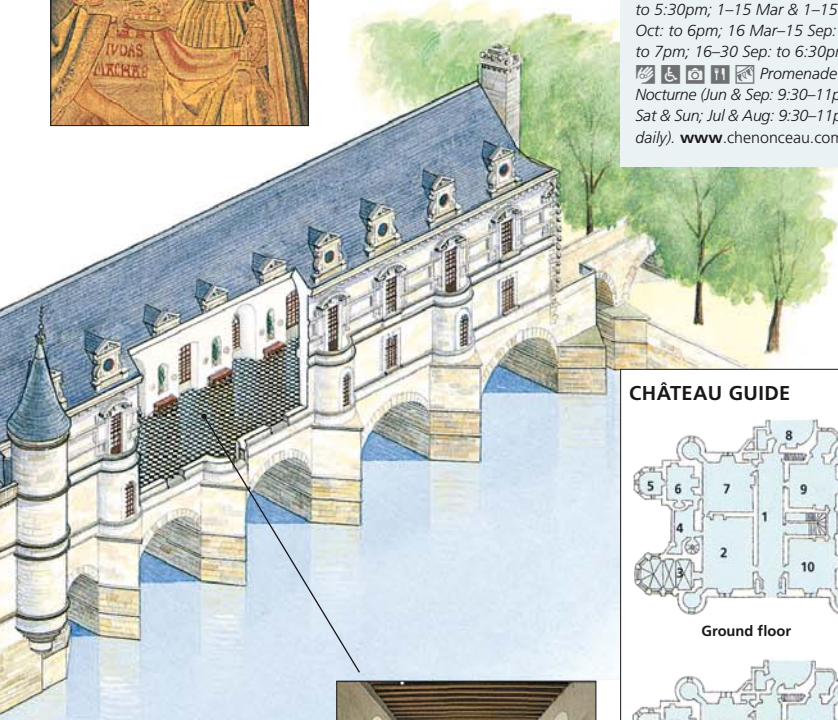
The Three Graces
Painted by Charles-André Van Loo (1705–65), The Three Graces depicts the pretty Mailly-Nesle sisters, all royal mistresses.





Tapestries

As was the practice in the 16th century, Chenonceau is hung with Flemish tapestries that both warm and decorate its well-furnished rooms.



★ Grande Galerie

Catherine de Médicis added this elegant gallery to the bridge designed by Philibert de l'Orme in 1556–9 for Diane de Poitiers.

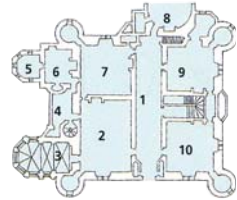


Chenonceau's Florentine-style gallery, which stretches across the River Cher for 60 m (197 ft)

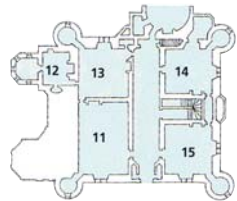
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map D3. **Tel** 02 47 23 90 07. Chenonceaux. 16 Nov–31 Jan: 9am–4:30pm daily; 1–15 Feb & 1–15 Nov: to 5pm; 16–28 Feb & 16–31 Oct: to 5:30pm; 1–15 Mar & 1–15 Oct: to 6pm; 16 Mar–15 Sep: to 7pm; 16–30 Sep: to 6:30pm. Promenade Nocturne (Jun & Sep: 9:30–11pm Sat & Sun; Jul & Aug: 9:30–11pm daily). www.chenonceau.com

CHÂTEAU GUIDE



Ground floor



First floor

- 1 Vestibule
- 2 Salle des Gardes
- 3 Chapelle
- 4 Terrasse
- 5 Librairie de Catherine de Médicis
- 6 Cabinet Vert
- 7 Chambre de Diane de Poitiers
- 8 Grande Galerie
- 9 Chambre de François I
- 10 Salon Louis XIV
- 11 Chambre des Cinq Reines
- 12 Cabinet des Estampes
- 13 Chambre de Catherine de Médicis
- 14 Chambre de Vendôme
- 15 Chambre de Gabrielle d'Estrées

The Creation of Chenonceau

Chenonceau reflects the combined influence of five women, who brought a feminine touch to this graceful building. First came Catherine Briçonnet, wife of the royal chamberlain, who supervised the construction of the château. Later, Diane de Poitiers, Henri II's mistress, created a formal garden and built a bridge over the Cher. After Henri's death, his widow, Catherine de Médicis, reclaimed the château and topped the bridge with a gallery. Chenonceau survived the 1789 Revolution – because of local respect for Louise Dupin, wife of a tax collector – to be restored by Madame Pelouze in the 19th century.



Sphinxes

Inscrutable stone sphinxes guarding the entrance to the gardens came from the Château de Chanteloup, which was destroyed in the 19th century (see p111).



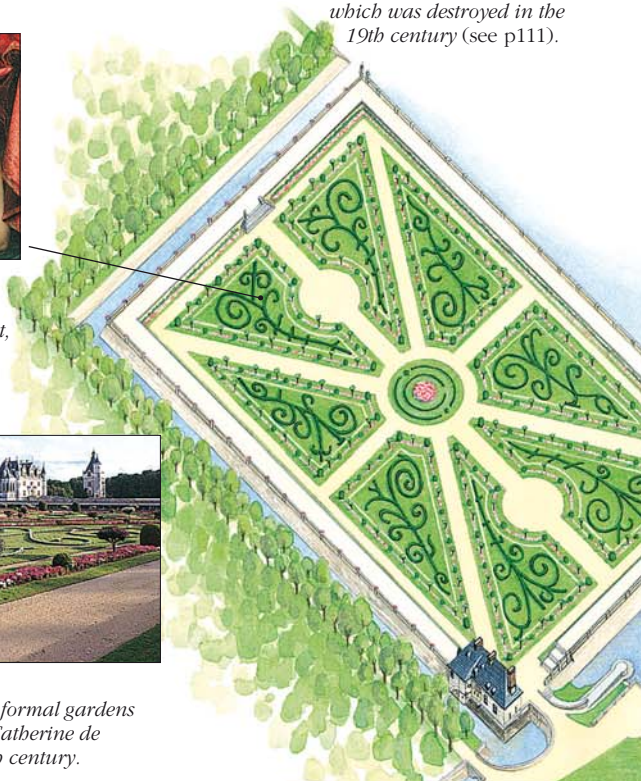
Diane de Poitiers

Henri II's mistress, here painted by François Clouet, created a large, formal garden, as well as the bridge across the Cher.



★Formal Gardens

The current designs of the formal gardens of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Médicis date from the 19th century.



TIMELINE

1512 Thomas Bohier acquires the medieval Chenonceau. His wife, Catherine Briçonnet, rebuilds it

1559 On Henri's death, Catherine forces Diane to leave

Henri II

1913 The château is bought by the Menier family, the *chocolatiers* who still own it today

1789 Chenonceau is spared in the French Revolution, thanks to Louise Dupin

1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

1575 Louise de Lorraine (1554–1601) marries Henri III, Catherine's son

1547 Henri II gives Chenonceau to Diane de Poitiers, his lifelong mistress

1533 Marriage of Catherine de Médicis (1519–89) to Henri II (1519–59). Chenonceau becomes a Loire royal palace

1730–99 Louise Dupin creates a salon for intellectuals at Chenonceau

1863 Madame Pelouze restores the château to its original state

1944 Chenonceau chapel is damaged in a bombing raid



Catherine de Médicis

After ousting Diane de Poitiers, Catherine de Médicis made her own mark on Chenonceau's design. She built the Grande Galerie over the Cher and added a formal garden to rival Diane's.



Catherine de Médicis' emblem

Louise Dupin

A well-read beauty with huge brown eyes, Louise Dupin entertained all the literary lions of her day, including Montesquieu and Voltaire.

One guest, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, stayed on to tutor her children and famously praised Chenonceau's cuisine, claiming he had become "as plump as a monk".



Madame Pelouze bought Chenonceau in 1863 and restored it to Catherine Briçonnet's original design. Fortunately, she stopped short of taking down the Grande Galerie.



Court Festivities

Catherine de Médicis staged lavish balls and festivities at Chenonceau, some featuring plaster triumphal arches and statues designed by Francesco Primaticcio, others with living "nymphs" leaping out of the bushes chased by "satyrs".



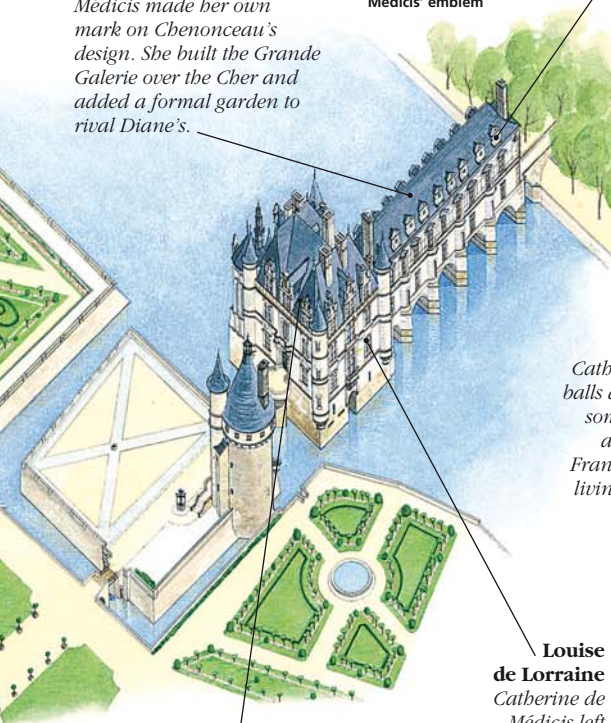
Louise de Lorraine

Catherine de Médicis left Chenonceau to her daughter-in-law, Louise de Lorraine.

Louise had her room redecorated in black upon the death of her husband, Henri III.

Catherine Briçonnet

supervised the creation of an innovative château design, with rooms leading off a central vestibule on each floor.





The Château d'Amboise, high above the town and the River Loire

Amboise ①

Road map D3. 12,000.

quai du Général de Gaulle (02 47 57 09 28). Fri, Sun. www.amboise-valde Loire.com

The bustling little town of Amboise is mostly visited for its château, but this is not the town's only attraction.

Château d'Amboise

Tel 02 47 57 00 98. daily.

1 Jan, 25 Dec.

A la Cour du Roy François (Jul & Aug: Wed & Sat).

www.chateau-amboise.com

While much of the château has been destroyed, it is still possible to see the splendour that prevailed when first Charles VIII and then François I brought the Italian love of luxury and elegance to the French court.

Amboise also played a tragic part in history. In 1560 a Protestant plot to gain religious concessions from the young King



Sculpted detail from the Logis du Roi

the chapel depict St Hubert and St Christopher. Some of the guard rooms and state rooms in the part-Gothic, part-Renaissance **Logis du Roi** are open to visitors, along with fascinating 19th-century apartments once occupied by King Louis-Philippe. Flanking the Logis du Roi is the **Tour des Minimes**, the original entrance to the château, with

its impressive spiral inner ramp, up which horsemen could ride.

François II was uncovered, and 1,200 conspirators were slaughtered, their bodies strung up from the castle and town walls, from trees, and even from the balcony on the Logis du Roi.

This horrifying episode was to spell the end of Amboise's glory, and over the years that followed, the château was gradually dismantled. The enchanting, late-Gothic **Chapelle St-Hubert**, where Leonardo da Vinci is said to be buried, has fortunately survived, perched on the ramparts of the château. Carvings on the exterior lintel of

Château du Clos-Lucé

2 rue du Clos-Lucé. **Tel** 02 47 57 00

73. daily. 1 Jan, 25 Dec.

restricted. www.closluce.com

This graceful Renaissance manor house on the outskirts of Amboise was the last home of Leonardo da Vinci. In 1516 François I enticed Leonardo to the royal court at Amboise and the following year settled him at Le Clos-Lucé (called Cloux at the time), where he lived until his death in 1519.

While here, Leonardo almost certainly conceived the plans for the Château de Chambord (see pp132–5). He is known to have made various drawings of double staircases, similar to the one that was built there. His bedroom, reception room, study, kitchen and a small chapel built for Anne of Brittany by Charles VIII are open to visitors. There are



The late-Gothic Chapelle St-Hubert, with its highly ornate roof and spire

models made from Leonardo's astonishing technical drawings in the basement.

Aquarium du Val de Loire




Lussault-sur-Loire.  **Tel 02 47 23 44 57.**  **daily.**  **3 wks Jan, 2 wks Nov.**  

www.aquariumduvaldeloire.com
With more than 10,000 freshwater fish on display in its 53 tanks, it is the largest such collection in Europe.

Environs

Behind the Renaissance Château de la Bourdaisière, now also a hotel (see p203), hides a *potager* with 500 varieties of tomato, 150 kinds of lettuce and over 200 different herbs. Sample its produce at the Tomato Festival (mid-Sep).



Château et Jardins de la Bourdaisière

Montlouis-sur-Loire. **Tel 02 47 45 16 31.**  **May–Oct: daily.**  
www.chateaulabourdaisiere.com



Leonardo da Vinci's bedroom at the Château du Clos-Lucé

Pagode de Chanteloup

Forêt d'Amboise. **Tel 02 47 57 20 97.**  **Apr–Sep & school hols: daily.**  **park only.**
www.pagode-chanteloup.com

In the forest of Amboise, southwest of Amboise itself, stands this Chinese-style pagoda, more than 44 m (140 ft) high and built in seven stories, linked by steep spiral staircases. Each layer is smaller than the preceding one and contains an airy, octagonal room with a domed ceiling.

LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452–1519)



Engraving of Leonardo da Vinci

architect and engineer to the king), mainly writing and drawing. As he was left-handed, the paralysis that affected his right hand was not a major handicap. Fascinated by hydrology, he produced plans to link the royal residences of the Loire Valley via waterways and even proposed rerouting the river. He also organized a series of elaborate court festivities, planning them down to the last detail with the same meticulous care he lavished on his scientific designs.

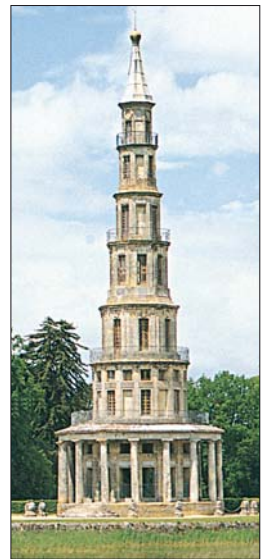


A model of Leonardo's prototype for a "car"

Seven avenues lead into the forest from the pagoda, which is reflected in a large lake.

This is all that is left of a splendid château built by Louis XV's minister, the Duc de Choiseul (1719–85). In the 1770s, Choiseul fell out with the king's mistress, Madame du Barry – he had been a protégé of her predecessor Madame de Pompadour – and was exiled from Versailles. He retreated to the château he had bought at Chanteloup in 1761 and rebuilt it. He spent his time entertaining on a large scale and dabbling in farming. After his death, the château was abandoned and then pulled down in 1823.

An exhibition in the pavilion explains the history of the once magnificent château and, for those brave enough to climb, there are impressive views of the Loire Valley from the top of the tower.



The Pagode de Chanteloup, in the heart of the forest of Amboise

Street-by-Street: Tours 19

The medieval old town, Le Vieux Tours, is full of narrow streets lined with beautiful half-timbered houses. Now sensitively restored, it is a lively area crammed with little cafés, bars and restaurants that attract locals as well as tourists. There are also numerous chic fashion boutiques and small shops devoted particularly to craft work and to stylish kitchen equipment. At its heart is the attractive place Plumereau, which in fine weather is filled with parasol-shaded café tables.



★ Maison de Tristan

The brick-and-stone 15th-century *Maison de Tristan* is renowned for its vaulted spiral staircase.

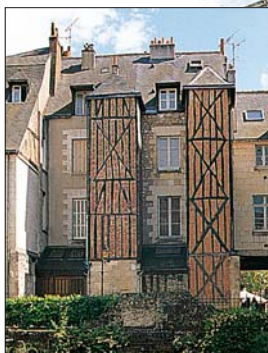


Musée du Gemmail

Inside the vine-covered *Hôtel Raimbault*, a museum displays jewel-like works of art made from stained glass.

Place Pierre-le-Puellier

A Gallo-Roman and medieval cemetery has been excavated in this square, which once formed part of a Renaissance cloister.



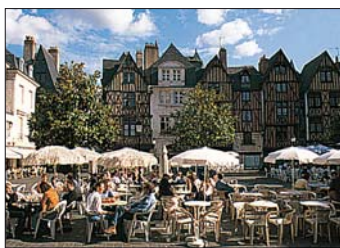
0 metres 50
0 yards 50



STAR SIGHTS

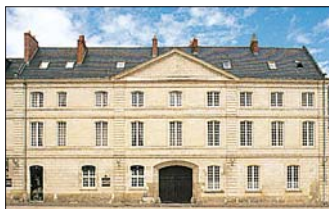
- ★ Place Plumereau
- ★ Maison de Tristan

The **Eglise St-Saturnin** is a Carmelite church built in the 15th century.



★ Place Plumereau

The lively square is surrounded by tall, half-timbered buildings dating from the 15th century.



Hôtel de la Monnaie

This 18th-century mansion, at No. 5 rue de la Monnaie, stands in a street of mainly 17th-century houses.

Carved Posts

The wooden posts on the twin-gabled house at the corner of the rue du Change are adorned with carved figures and scenes.



Tour Charlemagne

A terracotta relief depicting St Martin can be seen on the Tour Charlemagne, one of two towers that have survived from the medieval Old Basilica of St-Martin.



KEY

— — — Suggested route

Exploring Tours

The pleasant Cathedral city of Tours, popular with foreign students eager to learn the country's purest French, is a perfect base for exploring Touraine's impressive châteaux. But Tours itself, its medieval heart imaginatively restored, repays exploration, too. Once a major Gallo-Roman centre and later filled with pilgrims flocking to St Martin's tomb, it has remained prosperous over the centuries. Yet despite the recent rapid expansion beyond the Loire and Cher rivers, it has kept its unhurried, provincial charm.



Tours's Pont Wilson, recently rebuilt, spanning the Loire

Tours Town Center

The area of the town close to the magnificent **Cathédrale St-Gatien** (see pp116–17) was part of the original Roman settlement. In the 3rd century AD, it was enclosed by a wall, the shape of which can still be seen in the rue des Ursulines, circling the cathedral and the Musée des Beaux Arts. The rue du Général-Meurin, a curving cobbled street of elegant houses once occupied by the clergy, follows the line of a Roman amphitheater.

On the west side of Tours, a religious community grew up around the sepulchre of St Martin (see p49). The saint's tomb now lies in the crypt of the late 19th-century New Basilica, which was built on the site of the considerably larger, medieval Old Basilica. Two stone towers – the **Tour Charlemagne** and the **Tour de l'Horloge** – on either side of the rue des Halles, survive from the earlier building. Not far from the towers, the **place Plumereau**, with its charming medieval houses and tempting cafés, attracts locals, foreign students and tourists in large numbers.

The half-timbered house at No. 39 rue Colbert bears a wrought-iron sign dedicated

to the *Pucelle Armée* (the armed maid), recalling that Joan of Arc (see p137) bought her suit of armour from a workshop here, before setting out to liberate Orléans in 1429. Nearby is the **place Foire-le-Roi**, a square where, thanks to a permit granted by the king in 1545, regular fairs were once held. The main merchandise was the silk that had been a key factor in the town's economy since the middle of the previous century. Of the gabled houses that line the square, the finest is the Renaissance Hôtel Babou de la Bourdaisière, named after the

finance minister to François I, who lived there. Slightly to the west, the 13th-century **Eglise St-Julien** stands on the site of an abbey founded in the 6th century.

The central bridge crossing the Loire, the **Pont Wilson**, is known locally as the *pont de pierre* (stone bridge). It is an exact replica of the town's original 18th-century bridge, which collapsed suddenly in 1978, making national headlines. It was rebuilt following the original design after a referendum of local residents backed the idea.

Musée des Beaux-Arts

18 pl François-Sicard. **Tel** 02 47 05 68 73. Wed–Mon. 1 Jan, 1 May, 14 Jul, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.

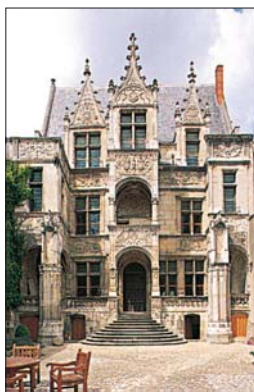
The Museum of Fine Arts, conveniently situated next to the Cathédrale St-Gatien, is shaded by a cedar of Lebanon nearly two centuries old and fronted by attractive formal gardens. Once the Archbishop's Palace, the building dates mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Its collections of paintings range from the Middle Ages to contemporary artists and include two celebrated altarpiece panels by Andrea Mantegna, *The Resurrection* and *Christ in the Olive Grove*, which were painted between 1456 and 1460 for the church of San Zeno in Verona.

To the right of the entrance courtyard is an outbuilding housing a huge stuffed circus elephant that died in Tours in the early 20th century.



Christ in the Olive Grove (1456–1460) by Andrea Mantegna



The Hôtel Gouin's elaborate Renaissance façade

Hôtel Gouin & Musée Archéologique

25 rue du Commerce. **Tel** 02 47 66 22 32. Tue–Sun. 1 Jan, 25 Dec.

This fine example of early Renaissance architecture, its highly ornamented façade beautifully re-created following World War II destruction, now houses the city's archaeological museum. The collection, which commences with the prehistoric era and continues to the 18th century, includes an interesting group of Celtic

coins from the Chartres area, whose different values are denoted not by numerals but by pictures of animals. The most famous exhibit in the museum, however, is a set of scientific instruments collected in 1743 by the owner of Chenonceau château.

Musée des Vins de Touraine

16 rue Nationale. **Tel** 02 47 61 07 93

Wed–Mon. public hols.

The vaulted cellars and parts of the cloisters of the 13th-century **Eglise St-Julien** now form a wine museum, with a huge Renaissance winepress, displays on early viticultural

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map D3. 300,000.

pl du Général Leclerc. pl du Général Leclerc.

78 rue Bernard Palissy (02 47 70 37 37).

daily. Fêtes Musicales en

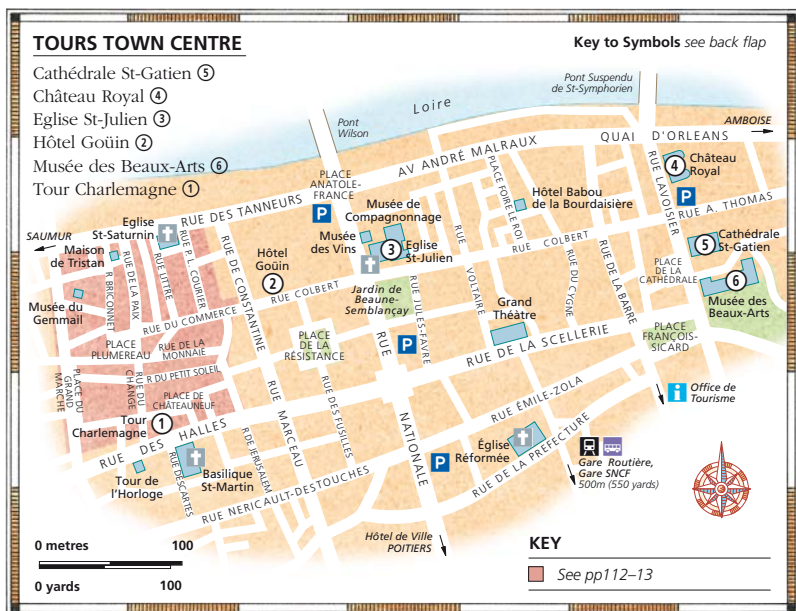
Touraine (end Jun); Foire à l'Ail et au Basilic (26 Jul, see p117).

www.ligeris.com

history, and collections of wine making tools dating from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. In an adjacent courtyard there is an original Gallo-Roman winepress, which was discovered near Azay-le-Rideau in 1946.



Exhibits in the Musée des Vins de Touraine



Tours: Cathédrale St-Gatien

The foundation stone of Tours' Gothic cathedral, named after St Gatien, a 3rd-century bishop, was laid in the early 13th century. Because building work continued until the mid-16th century, the cathedral provides an illustration of how the Gothic style developed over the centuries. The Early Gothic chancel was the first area to be completed, while the nave and transept represent the Middle or High Gothic period and the highly decorated west façade is Flamboyant (or Late) Gothic.



★ West Façade

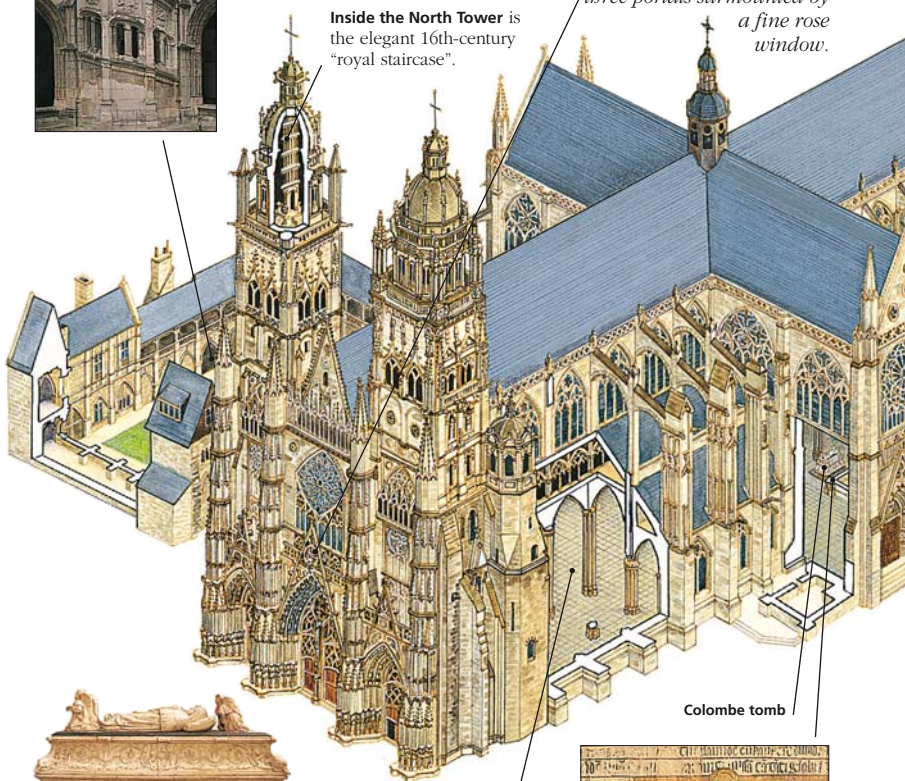
The richly carved Flamboyant west façade has three portals surmounted by a fine rose window.



Cloître de la Psalette

The cloisters, which lead off the north aisle, are made up of three galleries dating from the mid-15th and early 16th centuries.

Inside the North Tower is the elegant 16th-century "royal staircase".



Colombe tomb



★ **Colombe Tomb** (1499)
The marble tomb of Charles VIII's and Anne of Brittany's infant sons features lifelike effigies by Michel Colombe or one of his pupils.

The narrow nave has a vaulted ceiling, dating from the late 15th century.

Fresco

This 14th-century fresco, restored in 1993, shows St Martin giving half his cloak to a beggar.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Pl de la Cathédrale. **Tel** 02 47 70

37 36. ☐ 8:30am–8pm daily.

⬆ 11am, 6:30pm Sun.



Colombe Statue

This statue of Tours' famous sculptor, Michel Colombe, stands in a square near the cathedral.

In the chancel, the stained-glass windows, depicting Christ's Passion and the legends of St Martin and other saints, date from around 1265.



★ Stained-Glass Windows

The stained glass is notable for its rich, strong colours and for the paler stained panels, or grisailles, which let in more light than ordinary stained glass.

STAR FEATURES

- ★ Colombe Tomb
- ★ Stained-Glass Windows
- ★ West Façade

🏰 Château Royal de Tours

25 ave André Malraux. **Tel** 02 47 70 88 46. ☐ 2–6pm Tue–Sun.

Atelier Histoire de Tours (entry from church square). **Tel** 02 47 70 88 59. ☐ 2–6pm Wed & Sat.

☑ public hols. ♿

The château, which served as a royal residence in the 13th and 15th centuries, was erected on top of the ancient Gallo-Roman walls, parts of which are still visible.

The buildings, including the 18th-century Logis de Mars, used to house a waxworks museum of historic figures. However, this has recently closed down and given way to a contemporary art centre hosting a broad range of exhibitions.

Though only occasionally open to the public, the Tour de Guise can still be admired from the outside. The tower is named after the Duc de Guise, who made a daring escape while being held as a prisoner here following the assassination of his father at the Château de Blois in 1588 (see pp126–7).

In the Renaissance Logis des Gouverneurs, the exhibitions of the **Atelier Histoire de Tours** explain the city's long urban history using three-dimensional models and plans.

🏛 Musée du Compagnonnage

8 rue Nationale. **Tel** 02 47 61 07 93.

☐ mid-Sep–mid-Jun: Wed–Mon; mid-Jun–mid-Sep: daily. ☑ public hols. ♿

Housed in part of the abbey once attached to the medieval **Eglise St-Julien**, this unusual museum is devoted to craftsmanship. It has a fascinating collection of “master pieces” made by members of a guild of itinerant *compagnons* (journeymen) who applied to be awarded the prestigious title of Master Craftsman. Displays cover many trades, ranging from the work of stonemasons to that of clog makers, and even include some extraordinary spun-sugar creations.



A barrel on display in the Musée du Compagnonnage

GARLIC AND BASIL FAIR

On 26 July, the Feast of St Anne, the place du Grand-Marché in the Old Town, near the colourful covered market (*Les Halles*), is the scene of the traditional Garlic and Basil Fair (*Foire à l'Ail et au Basilic*). Pots of basil form a green carpet, and stalls are garlanded with strings of garlic heads, purple onions and grey or golden shallots.



Stalls laden with garlic and basil in the place du Grand-Marché



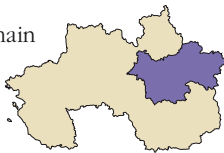
BLÉSOIS AND ORLÉANAIS

These two closely-linked regions are excellent starting points for an exploration of the central Loire Valley. The area's forests and marshlands have attracted nature lovers for centuries. During the Renaissance, magnificent hunting lodges were built by kings and nobles throughout the area, including the great Chambord, the sumptuously furnished Cheverny and the charming Beaugard.

Blésois and Orléonais remain richly forested, with abundant game, including rabbits and hares, deer and wild boar. The great forest of Orléans, still magnificent, contrasts with the heaths and marshy lakes of the Sologne, a secretive region of small, quiet villages and low, half-timbered brick farmhouses. Although a paradise for hunters and fishermen, other visitors rarely venture into the depths of this area.

The northern stretch of the Loire flows through towns whose names resound throughout the history of France. Bridges and castles at Gien, Orléans, Beaugency and Blois all assumed strategic significance during wars from the Middle Ages to the 20th century.

It was at Orléans in 1429 that Joan of Arc, lifting the English siege of the town, galvanized the spirit of the French army engaged in the Hundred



Years' War. The modern city's proximity to Paris has led to its growth as a commercial centre, but careful reconstruction after the devastation of World War II has meant that a sense of the past survives in the old *quartier*.

During the Wars of Religion, the château at Blois was sunk in political intrigue. Now restored, its walls still echo with the events of 1588, when the Duc de Guise was assassinated on the orders of the king, Henri III.

To the west of the region, the River Loir, smaller than its majestic sound-alike, flows through the countryside of the Vendômois and also through Vendôme itself, one of the most attractive towns in the region. Vendôme's cathedral, La Trinité, is only one of the memorable churches in Blésois and Orléonais, many of them decorated with early frescoes and mosaics.



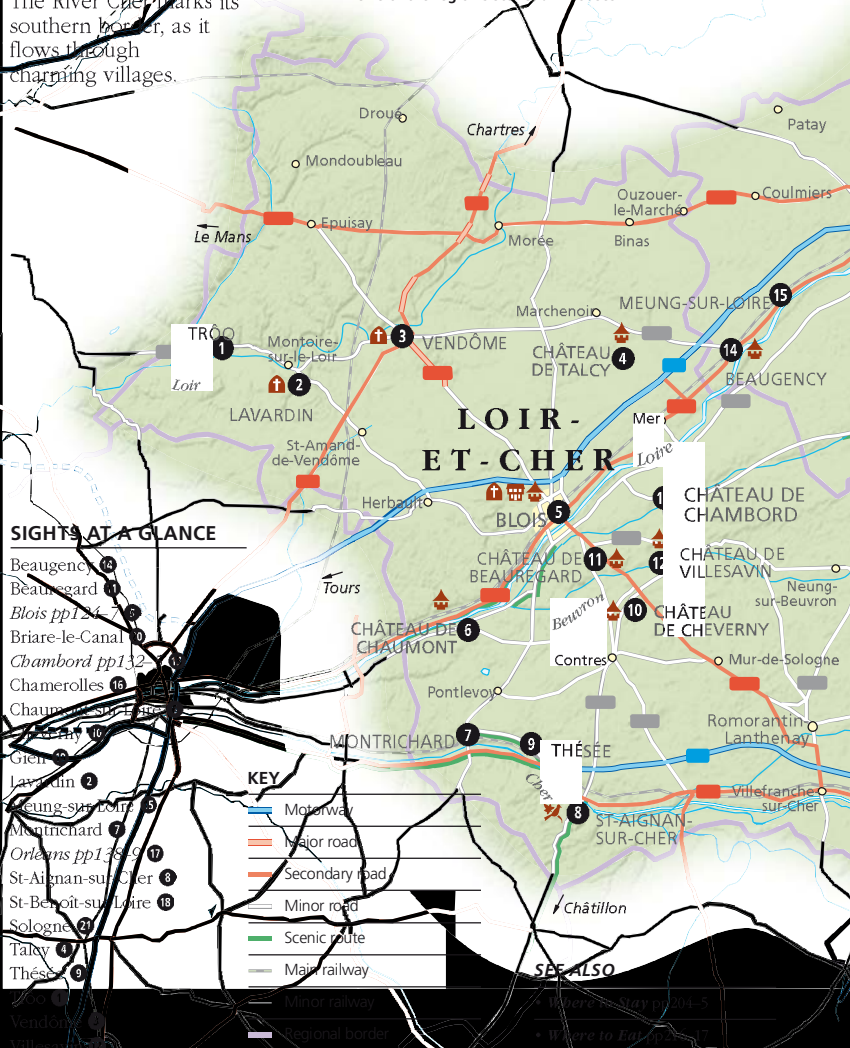
Anglers taking part in a competition on a local canal

Exploring Blésois and Orléanais

Orléans, the largest city in Blésois and Orléanais, lies at the confluence point of the River Loire. To the west is the Petite Beauce, fertile, wheat-growing land, while to the east is the great forest of Orléans, and teeming with wildlife. Downstream from Orléans, surrounded by forests. To the south, the Sologne is a land of woods and marshes, scattered with small lakes, or *stangs*. The River Cher marks its southern border, as it flows through charming villages.



One of the region's stone farmhouses



GETTING AROUND

The fastest route by car from Paris is *L'Aquitaine* autoroute (A10), which passes through Orléans and Blois. Some Paris-Tours TGVs stop at Vendôme, only a 45-minute journey. The

Corail express train from Paris takes one hour to Les Aubrais (a suburb of Orléans with a connecting train to the city centre) and a further 30 minutes to Blois via Beaugency and Meung-sur-Loire. From Tours, a local line follows the Cher, stopping at Montrichard,

Thésée and St-Aignan. Bus services between towns are extremely limited, especially during the school holidays. The drive along the N76, which parallels the River Cher, is very scenic, and the roads through the cool, forested areas of the region are tranquil and pleasant.



The town of Blois with its distinctive bridge spanning the Loire



Trôo's "speaking well"

Trôo 1

Road map D3. 320. Vendôme, then taxi. Montoire-sur-le-Loir (02 54 85 23 30).

On a cliff above the Loir, this village should be entered from the top through its ruined medieval gate. To the left of the gate is a covered "speaking well"; at 45 m (150 ft) deep, it produces a very clear echo.

During the Middle Ages, a massive fortress stood here. It was fought over at the end of the 12th century by Richard the Lionheart, who lost it to the French king, Philippe Augustus. In 1590, the uncrowned Henri IV ordered the fortress to be dismantled. All that remains today is a mound, or *motte*, from the top of which there is a good view of the valley below.

Parts of the **Eglise St-Martin**, nearby, date from the 11th century, including the nave walls. The windows in the square Angevin tower are decorated with ornamental columns.

Steep paths wind down the hill towards the attractive **Château de la Vouôte**, passing on the way the pretty flower gardens of a group of troglodyte dwellings, some of which are open to visitors. At the bottom of the hill is the

Grotte Pétrifiante, a cave full of stalactites that have been developing for more than 4,000 years.

Across the river, the little church at **St-Jacques-des-Guérets**, built in the 12th century, is justly famous for its 13 murals, painted in a distinctive Byzantine style. They were rediscovered in 1890 during restoration work. The *Christ in Majesty* in the apse is particularly beautiful.

St-Gilles chapel in nearby Montoire-sur-le-Loir is also worth a visit. It has some even finer 12th-century murals, remarkable for the range of colours used.

Lavardin 2

Road map D3. 250. Vendôme, then taxi. Montoire-sur-le-Loir (02 54 85 23 30).

The remaining fortifications of Lavardin's ruined **château**, towering above the reconstructed medieval bridge leading to the village, are an impressive sight. Situated on the boundary between the Capetian and Angevin kingdoms, the fortress was for centuries a key stronghold in battles between the French crown and the Plantagenet



Delicate murals in Lavardin's Eglise St-Genest

dynasty. In 1590, like the castle at Trôo, it was partly destroyed on the orders of Henri IV.

Memorable buildings in the town include the 11th-century town hall and the stone houses in the route de Villavard. Lavardin's treasure is the Romanesque **Eglise St-Genest** with its fragile and charmingly naïve murals dating from the 12th–16th centuries. Scenes from the life of Christ are alongside astrological symbols. Among the oldest of the frescoes is the *Baptism of Christ*, which is found at the entrance to the left chapel, together with the *Passion* and *Christ in Majesty*.

Château de Lavardin
Tel 02 54 85 07 74 (Mairie). May:
Sat & Sun; Jun–Sep: Tue–Sun.

Vendôme 3

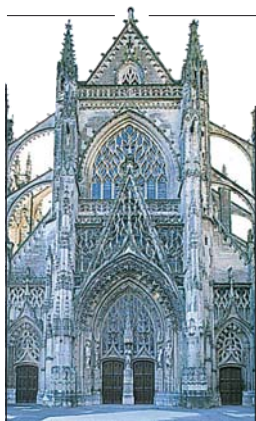
Road map D3. 18,000.
 47–49 rue Poterie. (02 54 77 05 07). Fri & Sun.

One of France's most scenic towns, Vendôme is built over a group of islands in the Loir, its bridges, water gates and old stone buildings forming a delightful tableau. Now that it is just 45 minutes from Paris by rail, it has

become a popular weekend retreat for many Parisians.

Situated on the border between the French and English feudal territories, the town changed hands many times. During the Hundred Years' War, it passed to the Bourbons in 1371, eventually becoming a duchy in 1515.

Later, held by the Holy League during the Wars of Religion, it was recaptured by Henri IV in 1589; the skulls of his leading Catholic opponents are by far the most grisly exhibit in the **Musée de Vendôme**. Set in an old abbey's cloisters, the museum also has a harp said to have been played by the ill-fated



Ornate façade of Abbaye de la Trinité in Vendôme

Marie-Antoinette, and some frescoes in the adjoining chapter house.

Vendôme's jewel is the abbey church of **La Trinité**, founded in 1034 by Geoffroy Martel, son of Foulques Nerra. It stands beside a 12th-century Romanesque bell-tower, with a spire reaching more than 80 m (260 ft). The church's bold, ornate façade was created by Jean de Beauce, who also designed the Old Bell-tower of Notre-Dame de Chartres. Its flame-like tracery is a typically virtuosic statement of the Flamboyant Gothic style.

Inside, beyond the transept, which dates from the 11th century, are choir stalls carved with amusing figures. To the



Wooden carving from La Trinité

left of the altar, a pretty latticework base with teardrop motifs once held a cabinet displaying a famous relic, which was said to be the tear supposedly shed by Jesus on the grave of Lazarus.

Shopping is centred around the place St-Martin, with its 15th-century clock-tower and carillon, and a statue of the count of Rochambeau, who commanded the French forces during the American Revolution. There is also a graceful, *fin-de-siècle* covered market just off rue Saulnerie.

The best views of the town's old fortifications are from the square Belot. Also visible from here is the Porte d'Eau, a water gate built during the 13th and 14th centuries, which once controlled the water for the town's mills and tanneries.

In the centre of town is the Parc Ronsard, with its 15th-century wash house, the Lavoir des Cordeliers, and the Old Oratorians College,

which dates from the 17th and 18th centuries. Vendôme's ruined château stands on a bluff above the town, with the 12th-century Tour de Poitiers at one corner. The garden offers some delightful panoramic views of the town.

Musée de Vendôme

Cloître de la Trinité. Tel 02 54 77 26 13. ☐ Wed–Mon. 🕒 Sun (Oct–Mar); 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. 📖



The Lavoir des Cordeliers in Vendôme's Parc Ronsard



Talcys 300-year-old wine press, still in working order

Château de Talcys 4

Road map E3. 📍 Mer, then taxi.

Tel 02 54 81 03 01. ☐ Apr–Sep:

daily; Oct–Mar: Wed–Mon. 🕒

1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. 📖 📖 also

night tours Jul–Aug. 📖 Literature

(early Jun). www.monum.fr

After the grander châteaux of the Loire Valley, Talcys comes as a delightful surprise: a fascinating, human-scale home, hiding behind a stern façade. The original building, a donjon, dates from the 15th century. It was transformed by Bernardo Salviati, a Florentine banker and cousin of Catherine de Médicis, who bought it in 1517 and added to the building significantly.

In 1545, the poet Pierre de Ronsard (*see p24*) fell in love with Salviati's 15-year-old daughter, Cassandre. Over the following decade, his love for her inspired the sonnets of his famous collection, known as *Amours de Cassandre*.

Bernardo Salviati gave Talcys its feudal look, adding the crenellated sentry walk and fake machicolations to the gatehouse. In the first courtyard, with its arcaded gallery, is an elegant domed well. A 3,000-bird dovecote in the second courtyard, dating from the 16th century, is the best-preserved in the Loire.

A huge, 300-year-old wooden wine press, still in working order, is worth a look. The château's vineyards are no longer productive, so the press is not in use. The grounds also contain old flower gardens.

Inside the château, the charming rooms have retained their original 17th- and 18th-century furnishings.

Street-by-Street: Blois 5

A powerful feudal stronghold in the 12th century, Blois rose to glory under Louis XII, who established his court here in 1498. The town remained at the centre of French royal and political life for much of the next century. Now an important commercial centre for the agricultural districts of the Beauce and Sologne, Blois, with its harmonious combination of white walls, slate roofs, and redbrick chimneys, is the quintessential Loire town. The hilly, partly pedestrianized old quarter, bordered by the river, the château, and the cathedral, is full of architectural interest.



Hôtel d'Alluye
Blois' outstanding Renaissance mansion was built in 1508 by Florimond Robertet, treasurer to three kings.

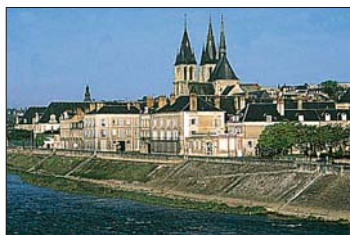
0 metres 100
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Façade des Loges, the château's most theatrical side, has Renaissance window bays rising in tiers to a gallery.



★ Château de Blois

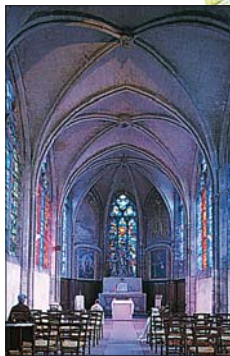
The rich history of the Château de Blois is reflected in its varied architectural styles.



Blois as seen from the Loire, with the three spires of the Eglise St-Nicolas in the centre

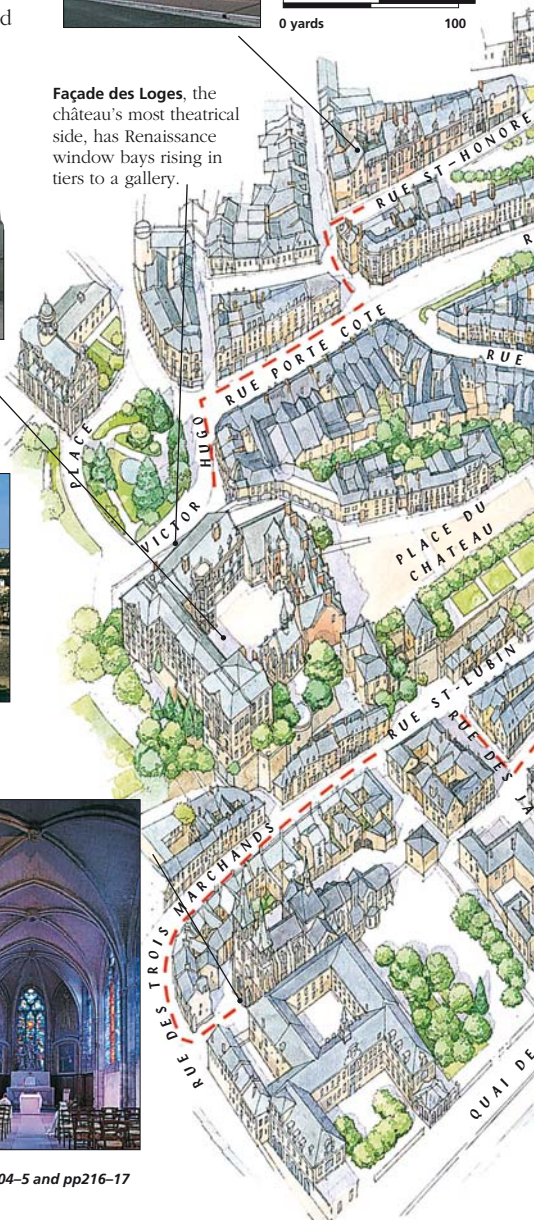
★ Eglise St-Nicolas

This striking, three-spired church once belonged to a 12th-century Benedictine abbey. Its high, narrow Gothic nave leads to an apse of magical beauty, sheltered by elegant Corinthian columns and lit through lovely blue glass.



KEY

— Suggested route





Escalier Denis-Papin
Named after the native son (1647–1714) who invented the pressure cooker, these stairs provide a remarkable view over the town and the river.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map E3. 52,000. pl de la Gare. 23 pl du

Château (02 54 90 41 41). **Tue & Sat.** Son et Lumière: Château de Blois (mid-Apr–mid-Sep: daily); Tous sur le Pont (music & theatre; early Jul).

Musée d'Histoire Naturelle

Couvent des Jacobins. **Tel** 02 54 90 21 00. Tue–Sun pm.

1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.

Musée d'Art Religieux

Couvent des Jacobins. **Tel** 02 54

78 17 14. Tue–Sat pm.

1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec.



Cathédrale St-Louis

Most of the original building was destroyed by a hurricane in 1678. The present cathedral was erected during the reign of Louis XIV.

Maison des Acrobates, in the place St-Louis, has carvings of medieval characters on its posts.

Couvent des Jacobins now houses museums of religious art and natural history.

★ Quartier Vieux Blois

This well-preserved area of Blois has some marvellous 16th-century buildings. This galleried town house is at the top of rue Pierre de Blois.



STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Château de Blois
- ★ Eglise St-Nicolas
- ★ Quartier Vieux Blois

Château de Blois 5



Porcupine emblem of the House of Orléans

Home to Kings Louis XII, François I and Henri III, no other Loire château has such a sensational history of skulduggery at court. It culminated with the stabbing, on the order of Henri III, of the ambitious Duc de Guise, leader of the Catholic Holy League (see pp54–5). This macabre event, which took place in the king's own bedroom, marked the end of the château's political importance. The building itself juxtaposes four distinct architectural styles dating from the 13th century, through the Gothic and Renaissance periods, to the Classical. The château has benefited from major restorations, which began in 1989.



King Louis XII

A statue of Louis XII (1462–1515) is the centrepiece of the entrance archway. Known as “Father of the People”, he was popular for his benevolent domestic policies.

STAR FEATURES

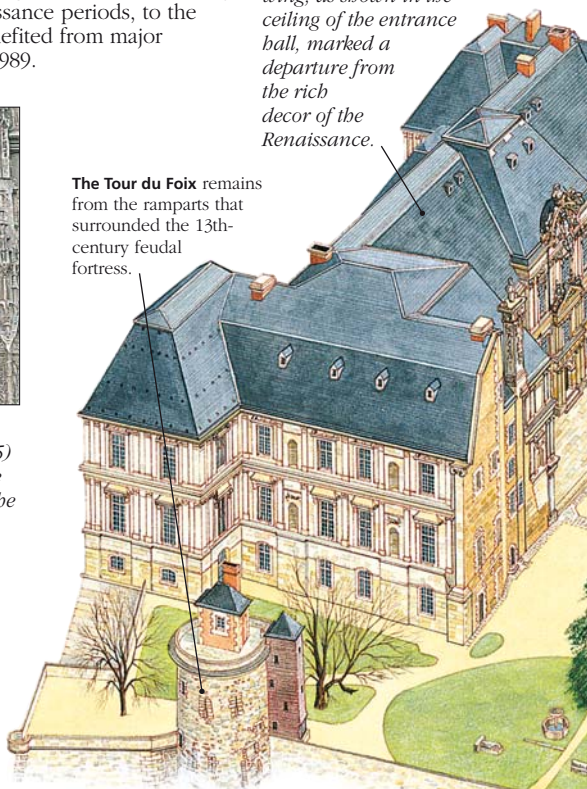
- ★ François I's Staircase
- ★ Cabinet de Catherine de Médicis
- ★ Salle des Etats Généraux



Gaston d'Orléans Wing

The simplicity of the Classical design of this wing, as shown in the ceiling of the entrance hall, marked a departure from the rich decor of the Renaissance.

The Tour du Foix remains from the ramparts that surrounded the 13th-century feudal fortress.



TIMELINE

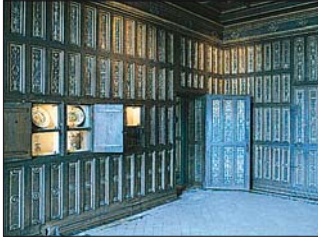


Architect Félix Duban

1200 Counts of Blois rebuild feudal fortress dating from 9th century		1576 Etats Généraux meets in feudal hall		1788 The decaying château is turned into barracks			
		1515 François I rebuilds north wing		1588 Etats Généraux meets again. Henri III has Duc de Guise assassinated			
1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	1900
1391 Fortress passes to Louis d'Orléans, brother of Charles VI				1635 Gaston d'Orléans replaces west wing with Classical building		1810 Napoléon makes city of Blois responsible for the château	
1498 Louis XII adds three new wings and rebuilds the St-Calais chapel						1843 Félix Duban begins restoration of the château	
						1989 Major restoration programme begins	

★ **Cabinet de Catherine de Médicis**

The queen's room has 237 carved panels, four with secret cupboards for her jewels, works of art or, some believed, poisons.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

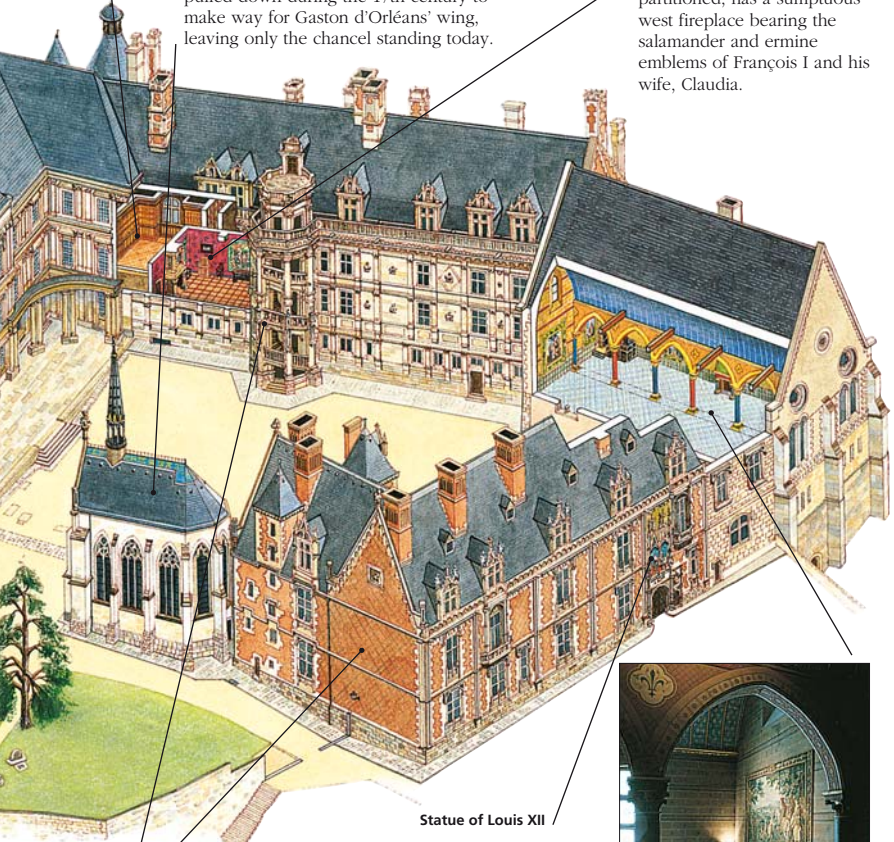
Pl du Château. ☎ 02 54 90

33 32. ☑ Apr–Sep: 9am–6:30pm daily; Oct–Mar: 9am–12:30pm, 2–5:30pm daily.

🗓 1 Jan, 25 Dec. 📷 📱 📺
 🗣 Ainsi Blois vous est conté (see p42).

The nave of the St-Calais chapel was pulled down during the 17th century to make way for Gaston d'Orléans' wing, leaving only the chancel standing today.

The Salle d'Honneur, previously partitioned, has a sumptuous west fireplace bearing the salamander and ermine emblems of François I and his wife, Claudia.

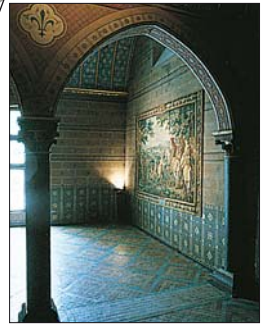


Statue of Louis XII

The Gothic Louis XII wing has intricate, decorative brickwork.

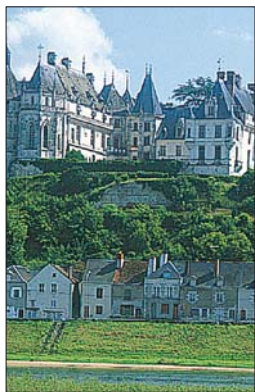
★ **François I's Staircase**

Enclosed in an octagonal well, the staircase, with its highly ornate carving, is a Renaissance tour de force. From its open balconies, the royal family could watch events in the courtyard.



★ **Salle des Etats Généraux**

Used for royal receptions and Etats Généraux meetings (see pp54–5), the 13th-century room survives from the original fortress.



Château de Chaumont, towering above the town

Château de Chaumont 6

Chaumont-sur-Loire.

Road map D3. Onzain, then taxi. 02 54 51 26 26. daily. 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. Festival International des Jardins (May–mid-Oct). www.monum.fr

Seen from across the Loire, Chaumont, set on a wooded hill above the river, appears like a fantasy of a feudal castle. Its tall, white donjon and round towers, built between 1466 and 1510, were never tested in battle and have thus remained in immaculate condition.

The main entrance, with its double drawbridge and elaborate machicolated parapets, is beautiful. Emblems carved on the towers include the crossed Cs of Charles II d'Amboise, whose family had owned a previous 12th-century fortress on the site.

When Charles inherited Chaumont in 1481, he undertook several major alterations. These were early examples of the Renaissance architectural style in France and included the east wing, with its elaborate frieze, and the south wing, with its entrance towers.

At one end of the south wing, the projecting octagonal tower, enclosing the main spiral staircase, predates those at Blois and Chambord (see pp126–7 and pp132–5).

Catherine de Médicis, wife of Henri II, acquired the château in 1560. Legend has it that Catherine's astrologer, Ruggieri, used the tower connected to her room as an observatory. Here he is said to have shown the queen the fate of her three royal sons in a magic mirror. Catherine's chamber also has

a balcony adjoining the attractive chapel, which was restored towards the end of the 19th century. In 1562 Catherine gave Chaumont to Diane de Poitiers, mistress of the late Henri II, after forcing her out of the Chenonceau (see pp108–9). Diane's entwined Ds and hunting motifs are carved on the machicolations of the entrance and on the east wing.

Subsequent owners either neglected the château or altered it, sometimes radically, to their own purposes. One 18th-century owner, abandoning the fortress design, demolished the north wing so that the whole courtyard was opened up to the river views.

Sweeping improvements began in 1875 when Prince Amédée de Broglie came to live in the château with his wife Marie, a sugar heiress. Their lavish lifestyle can be sensed in the handsome stables, which once housed an elephant, given to them on a visit to the Maharajah of Kapurtala

in India.

The council room has tapestries by Reymbouts and majolica floor tiles, brought from a 17th-century Palermo palace, while the library has medallions made in the château by Jean-Baptiste Nini in the 1700s. The

château's park was landscaped in 1884 by Achille Duchêne and closely follows the lines of an English country garden.

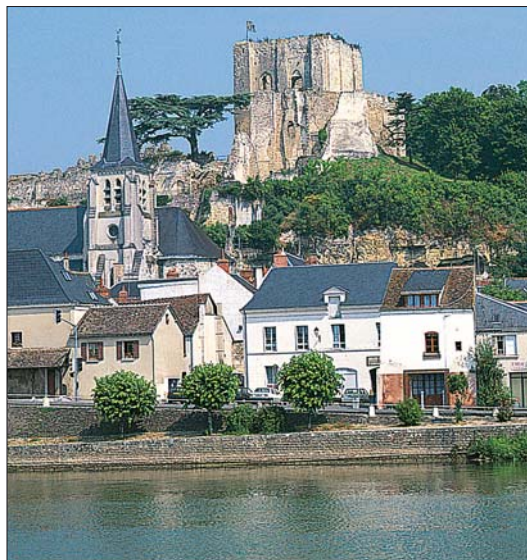


Stained glass from the dining room at Chaumont

Montrichard 7

Road map D3. 3,800. 1 rue du Pont (02 54 32 05 10). Mon pm, Fri am. www.montrichard.fr

This small village built of tufa rock is dominated by



Montrichard, seen from across the River Cher

the ruins of its **château**. The 11th-century draw-bridge, archers' tower and the remains of its Renaissance apartments remain, and the keep houses the small **Musée du Donjon** on local life.

Adjoining the château is the **Eglise Ste-Croix**. Here, in 1476, the future Louis XII reluctantly wed Jeanne, the tragically deformed daughter of Louis XI. The marriage was later annulled so Louis could marry Anne of Brittany.

🏰 Château de Montrichard & Musée du Donjon

Tel 02 54 32 57 15. 🗓 Easter–Sep: daily. 📺 📺 Les Chevaliers du Temps (Aug: 4:30pm daily); Son et Lumière Nocturne (Aug: 10pm Thu–Sat).



White tiger from Beauval Zoological Park

St-Aignan-sur-Cher 8

Road map E3. 🏰 3,700. 📍
St-Aignan-Noyers-sur-Cher. 📞 📍
02 54 75 22 85. 📅 Sat. 🌐 www.tourisme-valdecher-staignan.com

Once a river port, St-Aignan is now an engaging summer resort for boating, swimming and fishing. The town is dominated by the Renaissance château of the dukes of Beauvillier and the collegiate church of St-Aignan, a marvel of Romanesque art.

The château interior is not open to the public, but visitors can climb 19th-century stairs to look at its two elegant wings and enjoy the views from its courtyard terrace as a reward for their exertions. Ruined towers and

walls remain from a feudal fortress built by the counts of Blois. In rue Constant-Ragot, leading to the château and church, there is a fine half-timbered Renaissance house on the corner with rue du Four.

The **Collégiale de St-Aignan**, with its two impressive bell-towers, was begun around 1080. Its majestic chancel and sanctuary are built over an earlier Romanesque church, which now forms the crypt.

Once used as a cow-shed, the crypt still retains its Romanesque feel. Among the important frescoes to survive here are a portrayal of the miracles of St Gilles in the southern chapel and a rare 11th-century *Christ in Majesty* on the chancel vault.

Some of the 250 sculpted capitals in the main church are carved with scenes from the Old and New Testaments as well as allegories of sin and punishment. Others are worked with decorative motifs. In the Chapel of Our Lady of Miracles, the 15th-century ceiling paintings are equally fascinating.

The **Beauval Zoological Park**, 2 km (1¼ miles) south of the village, is among France's best. It contains some 4,000



St-Aignan's Chapel of Our Lady of Miracles

animals, a superb jungle house, a lagoon of piranhas, and impressive landscaped enclosures for big cats, including several magnificent prowling white tigers.

🦁 Beauval Zoological Park

Tel 02 54 75 50 00. 🗓 daily. 📺 📺

Thésée 9

Road map E3. 🏰 1,300. 📍 Jul & Aug: 5 rue Romaine (02 54 71 45 45); Mairie (02 54 71 40 20). 📅 Thu.

Just outside the charming little wine village of Thésée is the most important Gallo-Roman site in the Loire-et-Cher *département*, Les Maselles.

Impressive ruined walls with brick courses testify to the skills of stonemasons who, in the 2nd century AD, built Tasciaca. This settlement was a major staging post and ceramic-making centre on the road between Bourges and Tours. The **Musée Archéologique** within the town hall displays a quite dazzling and instructive array of jewels, coins, pottery and other interesting artifacts from this little-known site.

🏛 Musée Archéologique

Hôtel de Ville. Tel 02 54 71 00 88. 🗓 Jul–Aug: Wed–Mon; Easter–Jun: Sat, Sun & public hols, pm only. 📺



Fresco of *Christ in Majesty*, from the Eglise de St-Aignan



Classical façade of the Château de Cheverny

Château de Cheverny 10

Road map E3. **Tel** 02 54 79 96 29.
 daily. grd floor & park only.
www.chateau-cheverny.fr

The elegance of Cheverny's white tufa façade, with its pure Louis XIII lines, was achieved in a single phase of construction between 1620 and 1634, with all the finishing touches completed by 1648.

Initiating a new architectural style for the châteaux of the Loire Valley, Cheverny has no defensive elements, such as large turreted towers or formidable entrances. Instead, its Classical façade is striking in its simplicity. The château

stands on the site of a previous castle, owned by the Hurault family. Henri Hurault, with his wife, Marguerite, led the château's reconstruction, and the family has retained its ownership.

Jean Mosnier worked on the interior for ten years, using gilded beams, panels and ceilings. His finest work is in the dining room, with its scenes from Don Quixote's travels, and in the king's bedroom, where the combined effect of wall-hangings, painted ceilings and a bed canopied in Persian silk is stunning. The château's largest room, the Salle des Armes, displays a collection of arms and armour and is adorned with Mosnier's paintings and a large Gobelins tapestry, the *Abduction of Helen*.

Paintings in the château include a portrait of Cosimo de' Medici by Titian and Pierre Mignard's striking portrait of the Countess of Cheverny above the fireplace in the Grand Salon. There is a collection of fine portraits by Jean Clouet and Hyacinthe Rigaud in the adjoining gallery. The Tapestry Room, with pieces of work designed by David Teniers, also features a tortoise-shell commode and a fascinating balance-wheel clock showing phases of the moon, both of

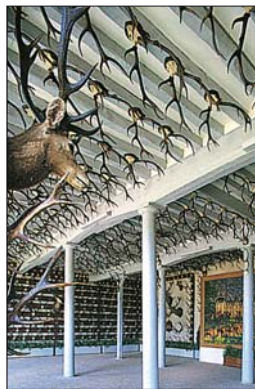


Arms and armour on display in Cheverny's Salle des Armes

which are in the distinctive Louis XV style. The château inspired Hergé to create the Château de Moulinsart for his *Tintin* stories.

The Cheverny hunt, which rides twice a week in winter, is famous throughout the Sologne. A visit to the kennels (open Apr–mid-Sep) is a highlight of the château, especially at 5pm, when 70 hounds wait their turn to eat. The Trophy Room, with 2,000 pairs of antlers mounted on the walls and ceiling, is currently closed to the public.

A contemporary garden has been planted on the site of the original French-style gardens.



The Trophy Room at Cheverny

Château de Beauregard 11

Cellettes. **Road map** E3. Blois, then taxi. **Tel** 02 54 70 40 05.
 Feb–Mar, Oct–Nov & Dec school hols: Thu–Tue; Apr–Sep: daily.
 Jan. www.beauregard-loire.com

Beauregard stands in a well-tended park on the edge of the Russy forest. Originally built at the beginning of the 16th century as a hunting lodge for François I, it was transformed into a graceful private manor house more than a century later by Jean du Thier, scholarly secretary of state to Henri II. It was du Thier who commissioned the king's Italian cabinet-maker, Scibec de Carpi, to make him an exquisite study panelled in gilded oak, the Cabinet des Grelots. This little room is



Detail from Beauregard's portrait gallery

decorated with the bells, or *grelots*, found on du Thier's crest, and has some charming paintings from the studio of Niccolò dell'Abate.

The portrait gallery, the château's most spectacular feature, was added in the 17th century by Henry IV's former treasurer, Paul Ardier. A complete catalogue of famous European faces from 1328 to 1643 – kings, queens, saints, explorers – is arranged in three rows around the gallery. Adding to the impact of these 327 portraits are beautiful beams and panels painted by Jean Mosnier and the largest

delft-tiled floor in Europe, which depicts an army on the move in Louis XIII costume.

Other delights include the southern gallery, with its rich Brussels tapestry and carved furniture, and the kitchen, with its flagstone floors and a table built around the central column.

Above the ratchet-operated spit, a motto on the chimney breast advises that those who keep promises have no enemies.

Château de Villesavin ¹²

Villesavin. Road map E3. Blois, then taxi. Tel 02 54 46 42 88.

Feb–Dec: daily. 25 Dec.
 & grd flr only. www.chateauvillesavin.com

Villesavin, built between 1527 and 1537 by Jean Breton, was his home while he supervised works at Chambord (see pp132–5) nearby. Stone carvers from the royal château ornamented Villesavin and presented Breton with the beautiful Florentine basin made of Carrara marble that stands proudly in the entrance courtyard.

This is one of the least altered of the many late-Renaissance châteaux in the Loire Valley.

Villesavin, with its low walls and un-

usually high

roofs, was built

around three

very spacious

courtyards. The

elegant southern

façade ends with

a large dovecote,

which has 1,500 pigeonholes and a revolving ladder.

The château's essentially domestic spirit is also evident in the service court, overlooked by a spacious kitchen with a working spit. The interesting collection of old carriages on display here includes an 18-m (59-ft) long *voiture de chasse* with four rows of seats, from which ladies could watch the hunt.



One of Villesavin's antique carriages

Environs

Situated on the southern banks of the Beuvron river, Bracieux is worth a visit for its grand covered market, which was built during the reign of the Renaissance king François I (1515–47). At that time, the town acted as an important staging post on the routes between the towns of Tours, Chartres and Bourges.

The market is built of brick, stone and wood, with an upper tithe barn. Its original oak posts were strengthened during the 19th century.

There are also attractive 17th- and 18th-century houses.



Garden façade of the Château de Villesavin

Château de Chambord 13



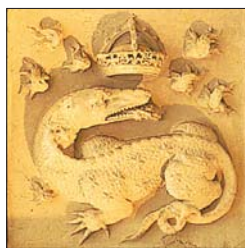
Statue of Diana in the Salle de Diane

Henry James once said: “Chambord is truly royal – royal in its great scale, its grand air, and its indifference to common considerations.” The brainchild of the extravagant François I, the château began as a hunting lodge in the Forêt de Boulogne. In 1519 the original building was razed and Chambord begun, to a design probably initiated by Leonardo da Vinci. By 1537 the keep, with its towers and terraces, had been completed by 1,800 men and two master masons. The following year, François I began building a private royal pavilion on the northeast corner, with a connecting two-storey gallery. His son Henri II continued the west wing with the chapel, and Louis XIV completed the 440-roomed edifice in 1685.



★ Skyline

Chambord's skyline is its most astonishing feature – a bizarre jumble of different forms, likened to an overcrowded chess board.



Salamander

François I's emblem appears more than 700 times in the château. It symbolizes patronage of the good and destruction of the bad.

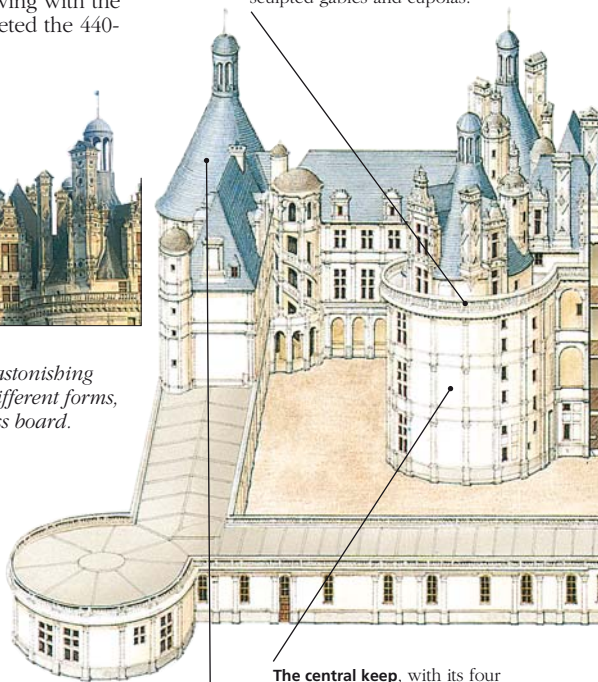
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Skyline
- ★ Grand Staircase



The Château de Chambord with the Cosson, a tributary of the Loire, in the foreground

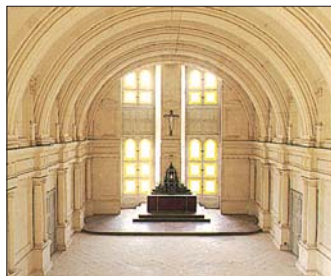
The roof terraces include miniature spires, stair turrets, sculpted gables and cupolas.



The central keep, with its four circular towers, forms the nucleus of the château.

Chapel

Begun by François I shortly before his death in 1547, the chapel was given a second storey by Henri II. Later, Louis XIV embellished the roof.



François I Staircase

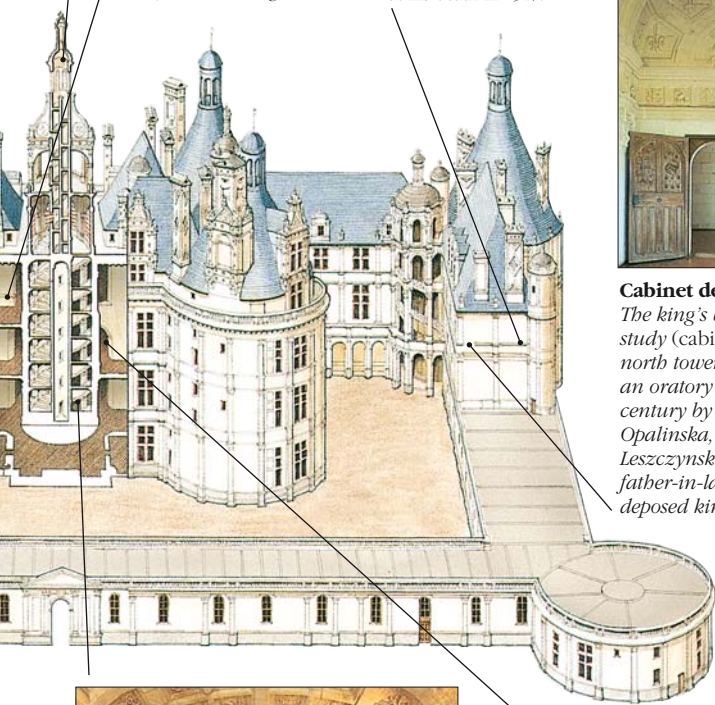
The external spiral staircase located in the northeastern courtyard was added at the same time as the galleries, starting in 1538.



The lantern tower, 32 m (105 ft) high, is supported by flying buttresses.

The guardrooms, which were once the setting for royal balls and plays, have ornate, vaulted ceilings.

François I's bedchamber in the east wing, as it was at his death in 1547.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

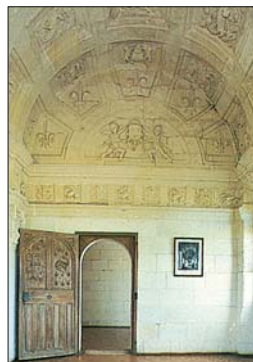
Road map E3. Blois, then bus or taxi. **Tel** 02 54 50 40 00.

Oct–Mar: 9am–5:15pm daily; Apr–Sep: 9am–6:15pm daily.

1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec.

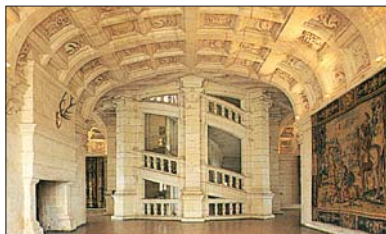
Spectacle d'Art Equestre **Tel** 02 54 20 31 01 for reservations (May–Sep daily).

Son et Lumière: Les Clairs des Lunes (Jul & Aug, 10pm–midnight daily). **www.chambord.org**



Cabinet de François I

The king's barrel-vaulted study (cabinet) in the outer north tower was turned into an oratory in the 18th century by Queen Catherine Opalinska, wife of Stanislas Leszczynski (Louis XV's father-in-law and the deposed king of Poland).



★ Grand Staircase

Seen here from the guardrooms, this innovative double staircase was supposedly designed by Leonardo da Vinci. Two flights of stairs spiral around each other.



Louis XIV's Bedchamber

The Sun King's state apartments are the grandest in the château.

The History of Chambord

Chambord, the largest château in the Loire, was a *folie de grandeur* of the young François I, whose ruling passions were hunting and flirting. “He is forever chasing, now stags, now women,” the Venetian ambassador once said of him. The king personally supervised the enclosure of the game park surrounding Chambord with the most extensive wall in France – nearly 32 km (20 miles) long and 2.5 m (8 ft) high. At one point, he even suggested diverting the Loire to flow in front of his château, but instead settled for redirecting the nearer Closson to fill his moat.



François I as a young man, with various symbols of his kingship

After François I

On his father's death, Henri II took charge of François I's ambitious project. Subsequent owners – Louis XIII, who had no great love of hunting, and his brother Gaston d'Orléans – continued to modify the château. By the 17th century, Chambord comprised 440 rooms and had 365 chimneys, 14 main staircases and 70 smaller stairways.

Louis XIV, whose chief youthful amusement was hunting, took Chambord very

seriously. His full court retinue visited the château numerous times. With balls, plays by Molière and operatic ballets, he re-created the glittering lifestyle of François I.

Louis XV also hawked at Chambord, but by 1725 he was ready to relinquish the château to his father-in-law, Stanislas Leszczynski. The exiled King of Poland is reported to have disliked the winter draughts. Certainly, he filled in the moats to prevent malarial fevers.

The last owner to enjoy Chambord's theatricality was the Maréchal de Saxe, victor over the English troops at the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745.



Louis XIV portrayed as Jupiter, conquering La Fronde

As well as lodging his actress mistress here, Saxe also kept two cavalry regiments whose mock battles he watched from the roof terraces.

During the second half of the 18th century, Chambord fell into neglect. Stripped during the French Revolution, the château was hardly used by the Bourbon pretender, Henri, Duc de Bordeaux, to whom it was given by public subscription in 1821. It was sequestered by the state in 1915, which bought it in 1930. A restoration programme was begun in the 1970s.



A view of Chambord (detail) by PD Martin (1663–1742)

TIMELINE

1547–59 Henri II adds the west wing and second storey of the chapel

1560–74 Charles IX continues tradition of royal hunting at Chambord and writes *Traité de la Chasse Royale*



Maréchal de Saxe

1840 Chambord declared a *Monument Historique*

1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

1670 Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* staged at Chambord

1519–47 The Count of Blois' hunting lodge is demolished by François I and the château created

1685 Louis XIV completes the building

1748 Acquired by the Maréchal de Saxe. On his death the château falls into decline

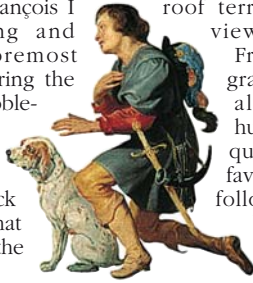
1725–33 Inhabited by exiled king of Poland

1970s Under Giscard d'Estaing, Chambord is restored and refurnished and the moats redug

Royal Hunting at Chambord

Under the influence of François I and his heirs, hunting and hawking were the foremost pastimes of the court during the 16th century. A Tuscan nobleman complained that the king only stayed in a place “as long as the herons last”. They were quick prey for the 500 falcons that travelled with the rest of the royal retinue.

Within his vast oak forests, the king rode out at dawn to a prepared picnicking spot, there to feast and await the selection of a red deer tracked by his beaters. The quarry flushed, he would ride at full tilt in pursuit, sometimes for hours. For ladies of the court, Chambord’s

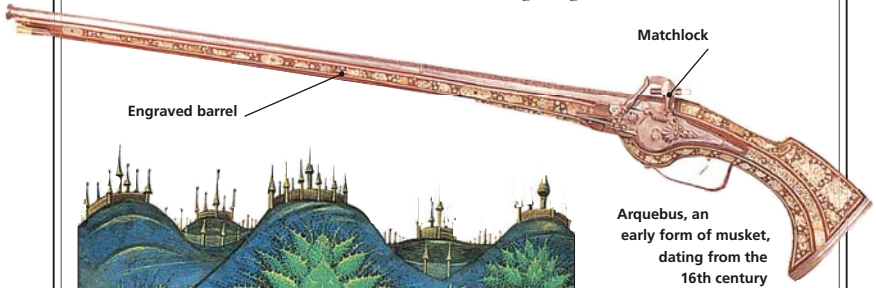


St Hubert, patron saint of hunting

roof terraces offered matchless views of these exertions.

François’ son Henri II and grandson Charles IX were also keen and practised hunters, sometimes pursuing quarry on foot. Louis XIV favoured the English sport of following packs of hounds, but falconry was preferred by Louis XV.

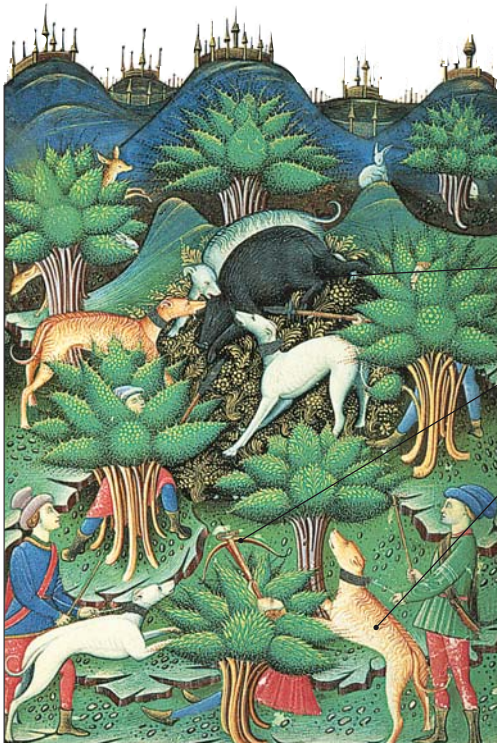
Hunting was regarded as an art by the court, and its tools – weapons, horns and costumes – were carefully designed and crafted. For centuries, it was also a favourite subject for painters and tapestry designers, whose works were used to decorate palaces and hunting lodges.



Engraved barrel

Matchlock

Arquebus, an early form of musket, dating from the 16th century



Wild boar was a favourite beast of the chase because of its strength and ferocity. Its head was considered a delicacy.

The crossbow was a popular hunting weapon thanks to its versatility and rapid rate of fire.

Greyhounds, prized for their speed and keen eyesight, were used as hunting dogs.

The Boar Hunt comes from the *Traité de Fauconnerie et de Vénerie* (1459), one of many treatises on falconry and hunting to hounds. In the foreground, beaters and dogs chase their quarry. Behind them, animals and men witness the end of the hunt.

Beaugency 14

Road map E3. 7,500.
f 3 pl de Docteur Hyvernaud (02 38 44 54 42). Sat. Festival de Beaugency (first & second wkend Jul).

With the Loire racing beneath its famous 23-arch bridge, the medieval town of Beaugency makes a delightful base for exploring the Orléanais area. The town is surprisingly well preserved, although its bridge, the best on the Loire between Orléans and Blois, has attracted the attentions of a number of armies over the centuries. Restored in the 16th century, the bridge was damaged again in 1940 when the Allied army blew up its southern end to prevent the Nazis from crossing the river.

On the place Dunois at the top of rue de l'Abbaye stands a massive 11th-century keep. Opposite is the Romanesque abbey church of **Notre-Dame**, where Eleanor of Aquitaine's marriage to Louis VII was annulled in 1152, leaving her free to marry the future Henry II of England.

Higher up is the 16th-century Tour St-Firmin, near an equestrian statue of Joan of Arc. Next to the keep, her companion-in-arms, Jean Dunois, Bastard of Orléans and Lord of Beaugency, built the **Château Dunois**, currently under restoration. Nearby, in rue des Trois Marchands, is a



Beaugency's 11th-century clock-tower, once gateway to the town

medieval clock-tower and the Renaissance façade of the Hôtel de Ville. A flower-lined stream runs through the old mill district.

Château Dunois

Pl Dunois.
Tel 02 38 44 55 23.
 for restoration until 2008.

Meung-sur-Loire 15

Road map E3. 6,300.
f 7 rue des Mauves (02 38 44 32 28). Sun am, Thu pm.

This pretty little village, sloping down to the Loire, was the birthplace of Jean de Meung (*see p24*), one of the

authors of the 13th-century masterpiece *Le Roman de la Rose*. There has been a town on this site since Gallo-Roman times, when it was known as Magdunum.

Beside the impressive Romanesque church of **St-Liphard**, built from the 11th to the 13th century, rise the feudal towers of the **Château de Meung**. Frequently altered from the 12th century to the 18th century, the château was built in a variety of styles. The 18th-century wing has an interesting collection of furniture, paintings and tapestries put together by the current owner.

More intriguing are the underground passages and dungeons of the older castle, dating from the 12th to 13th centuries and used for 500 years by the bishops of Orléans as a prison. In 1461, the poet François Villon (*see p24*), renowned for his life of disrepute as well as his fine writing, spent five months fighting with the other condemned criminals on a ledge above a cesspool in the château's claustrophobic oubliette. Thanks to a royal pardon from Louis XI, he was the only prisoner ever to emerge alive from there.

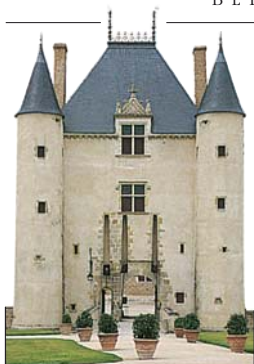
Château de Meung

Tel 02 38 44 36 47. Mar–Oct: daily; Nov–Feb: Sat, Sun pm.
 grd flr only.
www.chateaudemeung.com



Beaugency's medieval bridge, the Tour St-Firmin and the keep rising above the trees

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp204–5 and pp216–17



The entrance to the Château de Chameroles

Château de Chameroles 16

Chilleurs-aux-Bois. **Road map** E2.

☑ Orléans, then taxi. **Tel** 02 38 39 84 66. ☐ Feb-Jun & Sep-Dec:

Wed-Mon; Jul & Aug: daily.

☑ Jan, 25 Dec. ☑

On the edge of the huge forest of Orléans, this Renaissance château was built between 1500 and 1530 by Lancelot du Lac, Governor of Orléans

(who was named after the

legendary Arthurian knight).

Although it was built in the form of a fortress, with a drawbridge crossing a moat and a courtyard enclosed by turreted wings, Chameroles was

designed as a pleasant personal residence. Pretty Renaissance gardens, accurately reconstructed, extend to a gazebo offering views back to the château across a "mirror" lake. There is an area of rare aromatic plants, many of which were used during the 1500s for making medicines and perfumes.

A museum in the château traces the development of perfumery through the centuries, covering the variety of uses for perfumes as well as the refinement of the science of making them. This includes the laboratories of perfumers and naturalists and glittering displays of bottles, as well as a charming gift shop.

JOAN OF ARC

Joan of Arc is the supreme national heroine, a virgin-warrior, patriot and martyr whose shining self-belief turned the tide of the Hundred Years' War against the English. Nowhere is she more honoured than in the Loire Valley, scene of her greatest triumphs.

Responding to heavenly voices telling her to "drive the English out of France", Joan left her home soon after her 17th birthday in 1429 and travelled via Gien to Chinon to see the dauphin, the as yet uncrowned Charles VII. He faced an Anglo-Burgundian alliance on the verge of capturing Orléans. Joan convinced him she could save the



Joan of Arc, pictured in a medieval tapestry

city, armed herself in Tours, had her standard blessed in Blois and entered Orléans with a small force on 29 April. Galvanized by her leadership, the French rode the English off on 7 May. The people of Orléans have celebrated 8 May as a day of thanksgiving almost ever since. Joan returned to Gien to urge Charles forward to Reims for his coronation in July. In 1430 she was captured and accused

of witchcraft. Handed over to the English, she was burned at the stake at the age of 19. Joan's piety, patriotism and tragic martyrdom led to her canonization almost 500 years later, in 1920.



Stained-glass portrait of Charles VII from Loches



Baccarat perfume bottle in Chameroles' museum



Joan of Arc Entering Orléans by Jean-Jacques Sherrer (1855-1916)

Orléans 17



Heroic Joan
of Arc

Orléans was the capital of medieval France and a royal duchy until the 18th-century French Revolution, when it became staunchly Republican. Its historical fame might, at first glance, seem submerged by its 20th-century role as a rail junction, food processing and business centre, especially as the old quarter of the city was badly damaged during World War II. However, an area of the old town near the river, now reconstructed, is full of interest for the visitor, and there are many beautiful gardens in this “city of roses”.

Exploring Orléans

A sense of grandeur lingers in Vieil Orléans, the old quarter bounded by the cathedral, the River Loire and the **place du Martroi**. Dominating this square is Denis Foyatier's statue of the city's heroine, Joan of Arc, whose festival on 8 May is a highlight of the year. The plinth of the statue, which was erected in 1855, is beautifully sculpted with the events of her life. Two splendid Classical buildings, the Chancellery and the Chamber of Commerce, are also found in the square.

A few medieval buildings have survived in the narrower streets around rue de Bourgogne, a partly pedestrianized shopping street with an astonishing range of ethnic restaurants. Other delightful and often inexpensive restaurants can also be found close to the **Nouvelles Halles**, the city's covered market. The most sophisticated shopping street is the rue Royale, which leads to the 18th-century bridge, the Pont George V.

Maison de Jeanne d'Arc

3 pl de Gaulle. **Tel** 02 38 52 99 89. May–Oct: Tue–Sun; Nov–Apr: Tue–Sun pm only. public hols.

A reconstruction of the half-timbered house that lodged the warrior-saint for ten days in 1429, the Maison de Jeanne d'Arc presents scenes from her life as well as mementos, costumes and banners.

The evocative audiovisual dioramas include one that shows Joan's assault on the English-held Tourelles fort.



Orléans' Renaissance Hôtel Groslot, once a private residence

Hôtel Groslot

Pl de l'Etape. **Tel** 02 38 79 22 30.

daily. public hols.

The most handsome of the many Renaissance buildings in the city, the Hôtel Groslot, built between 1549 and 1555, served until recently as the town hall.

Built out of red brick crossed with black, this was a grand residence, with scrolled staircase pillars, caryatids and an ornately tooled interior. It was once considered fine enough to lodge the kings of France. Here, in 1560, the sickly, young François II died after attending a meeting of the Etats Généraux with his child bride, Mary, later Queen of Scots. The beautiful

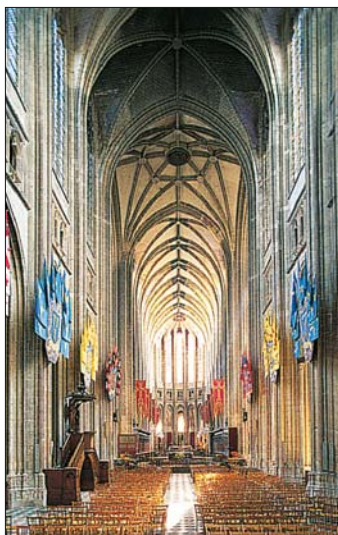
statue of Joan of Arc guarding the steps was sculpted by Princess Marie d'Orléans in 1840. Walk through the building to visit a charming little park, backed by the re-erected façade of the 15th-century Flamboyant Gothic chapel of St-Jacques.

Cathédrale Ste-Croix

Pl Ste-Croix. **Tel** 02 38 24 05 05

(tourist office). daily.

The cathedral, set on a spacious esplanade, was begun in the 13th century. The original building was completely destroyed by Huguenots in the 16th century and then restored in a supposedly Gothic style between the 17th and 19th centuries. Behind the ornate façade, the towering nave is lit by the radiating spokes of the rose window dedicated to the “Sun King”, Louis XIV. The chapel of Joan of Arc, whose martyrdom is portrayed in stained glass, features a kneeling sculpture of Cardinal Touchet, who fought for her canonization. The cathedral's most famous painting, a masterly rendition of *Christ Bearing the Cross*, by the Spanish religious painter Francisco de Zurbarán (1598–1664), has temporarily been removed for restoration.



The nave of the Cathédrale Ste-Croix



The peaceful Parc Floral in Orléans-la-Source

M Musée des Beaux-Arts

1 rue Fernand Rabier. **Tel** 02 38 79 21 55. **☐** Tue–Sat, Sun am. **🗓** 8 May, public hols. **♿** **🚶**
 The high standard of the collection, which includes a self-portrait by Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699–1779) and *St Thomas* by the young Diego Velázquez (1599–1660), represents the strength of European painting from the 14th to the early 20th century. There is a charming collection of miniature enamelled statuettes on the second floor, a contrast to the richness of the 19th-century paintings.

M Musée Historique et Archéologique

Square de l'Abbé Desnoyers. **Tel** 02 38 79 25 60. **☐** May–Jun & Sep: Tue–Sun pm only; Jul–Aug: Tue–Sun; Oct–Apr: Wed & Sun pm. **🗓** public hols. **♿**
 The chief treasures of this museum are the Celtic statues discovered at Neuvy-en-Sullias in 1861, which include a fine horse from the 2nd century AD (see p49). The museum also has a beautiful painted stone head of Joan of Arc and a pleasing variety of arts and crafts from the Middle Ages onwards.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

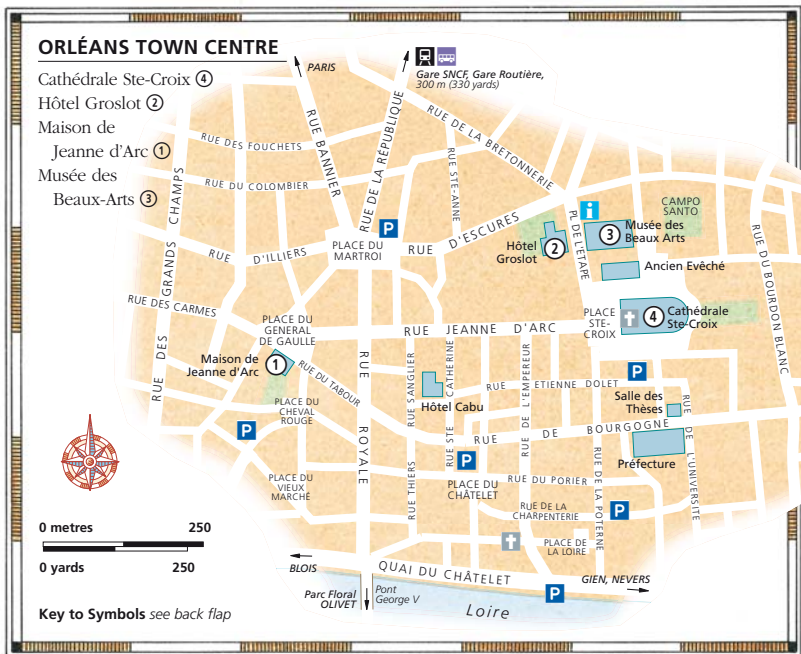
Road map E2. **📍** 270,000.
📍 ave de Paris. **📍** rue Marcel Proust. **📍** 2 pl de L'Etape (02 38 24 05 05). **🗓** Tue–Sun.
🗓 Fête Jeanne d'Arc: 7–8 May; Jazz: end Jun–early Jul.
www.tourisme-orleans.com

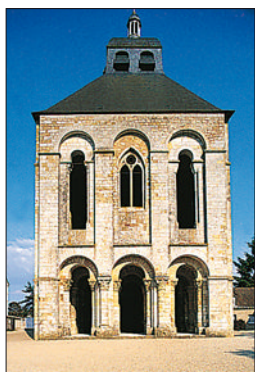
Environs

The suburbs of Orléans are pleasant places to relax after a day spent sightseeing in the city centre. In Olivet, for example, it is possible to go boating on the River Loire. This river also provides opportunities for pretty walks. A tributary of the Loire, the Loiret flows underground from near the town of St-Benoît-sur-Loire (see p140) and rises in the grand **Parc Floral** of Orléans-la-Source. A nature reserve, the park is a mass of blooms from April. Adjoining the park is the 17th-century Château de la Source.

📍 Parc Floral

Orléans-la-Source. **Tel** 02 38 49 30 00. **☐** Apr–Oct: 10am–7pm daily; Nov–Mar: 2–5pm daily. **🗓** 1 Jan, 25 Dec. **♿**





The Romanesque façade of the abbey church of St-Benoît

St-Benoît-sur-Loire 18

Road map F3. 1,800.

44 rue Orléanaise (02 38 35 79 00). www.saint-benoit-sur-loire.fr

This quiet town has one of the finest Romanesque abbey churches in France, constructed between 1067 and 1108. The most appealing feature of the façade is the belfry porch, probably built early in the 11th century by Abbot Gauzlin, son of the first Capetian king, Hugh. On the capitals of its 50 golden pillars are carved figures, including beasts and goblins.

Inside, thickset columns separate the side aisles from the rib-vaulted Gothic nave. The chancel, dating from the earlier Romanesque period, has blind arcades and a mosaic floor brought from Rome. The bas-relief head of a Norman raider is carved on the wall of the north transept. Its cheeks are pierced to expel its pagan spirit.

In the crypt, a lamplit casket contains the relics of St Benedict, the 6th-century father of Western monasticism. They were spirited here in 672 from Benedict's own monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy. By the 11th century, when the present building was begun, the Benedictine order was rich and St-Benoît-sur-Loire was renowned for its scholarship as well as its purloined relics. St-Benoît is a living monastery, and one of

the best ways to experience the spirit of the place is to attend midday mass sung in Gregorian chant.

The 9th-century church of **St Germigny-des-Prés** lies 5 km (3 miles) along the D60 from St-Benoît-sur-Loire. The small cupola of the east apse has an enchanting mosaic of angels bending over the Ark of the Covenant – a composition made up of 130,000 coloured-glass cubes probably assembled during the 6th century.

Gien 19

Road map F3. 16,500.

pl Jean-Jaurès (02 38 67 25 28).

Wed, Sat. www.gien.fr

Sensitively restored after being devastated during World War II, Gien is considered one of the Loire's prettiest towns. From its handsome quays and 16th-century bridge, houses of brick, slate and pale stone rise steeply to a château. It was built for Anne de Beaujeu, who acted as regent for her brother Charles XIII at the end of the 15th century.

Only the steeple tower of the **Eglise Ste-Jeanne d'Arc**, next to the château, survived the destruc-



Max Ingrand's stained glass

tion of the war, but a remarkable church replaced it in the 1950s. Warm facings, composed of bricks made in Gien's famous pottery kilns, blend with the patterned red and black brickwork of the château. The interior glows with stained glass by Max Ingrand and the faïence that is a speciality of the area. A museum of fine china and earthenware is open daily (except Sundays and public holidays) at the factory, which was founded in 1821 (see p221).

The **château** of Anne de Beaujeu, built between 1484 and 1500 on the site of one of the Loire's oldest castles, sheltered the young Louis XIV and the Queen Mother during the Fronde civil war (1648–53). Its grand beamed halls and galleries now house a superb museum of hunting,

tracing the sport's development since prehistoric times. The collection covers the weaponry, costumery, techniques and related artistry of almost every associated activity, from falconry to the royal chase.

The memorable entrance hall of the château features a 17th-century painting of St Hubert, the patron saint of hunting, depicting his conversion by the vision of a resurrected

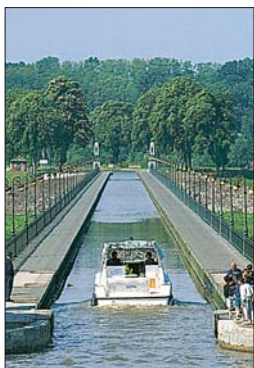


Gien's château and its 16th-century bridge across the Loire

stag carrying a crucifix between its horns. An Italian crossbow and a powder horn decorated with images of the mythical and tragic encounter between Diana and Actaeon are beautiful examples of 17th-century carving. Other prominent artists on display here include the 20th-century sculptor Florentin Brigaud, the Flemish etcher, Stradanus, and François Desportes, whose fine paintings dominate the spectacular trophy hall.

♣ Château et Musée International de la Chasse

Tel 02 38 67 69 69. ☐ Wed–Mon (Jul & Aug: daily). 📅 Jan, 25 Dec. 📺



A pleasure boat crossing Briare's elegant bridge-canal

Briare-le-Canal 20

Road map F3. 📍 6,000. 📺 📺
 📍 pl Charles-de-Gaulle (02 38 31 24 51). 📺 Fri.

This small town, with its attractive marina, is the setting for a sophisticated engineering masterpiece – the longest bridge-canal in Europe (see pp56–7). With stonework and wrought-iron flourishes designed by Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923), the structure crosses the Loire, linking the Briare-Loing canal with the Canal Latéral. These waterways in turn join the Seine and the Rhône rivers respectively. Visitors can stroll its length, lined in the style of a Parisian boulevard with elegant lampposts, or cruise across the 662-m (2,170-ft) bridge in a *bateau-mouche*.



Fishing on one of the peaceful étangs of the Sologne

The Sologne 21

Road map E3. 📍 📺 Romorantin-Lanthenay. 📍 (02 54 76 43 89).

Between Gien and Blois, the Loire forms the northern boundary of the Sologne, a vast area of flat heathland, marshes and forests covering nearly 500,000 ha (1,235,000 acres). The area is dotted with *étangs*, broad lakes teeming with fish, which are magnets for migratory birds and waterfowl. The forests are just as attractive to hunters and nature lovers now as they were during the Renaissance, when members of royalty chose to build their grand hunting lodges here. Much of the land is privately owned, although there are some public paths.

Romorantin-Lanthenay is the “capital” of the Sologne. With its 17th- to 19th-century buildings and its medieval quarter, it is pleasant to visit. The town is also home to the **Musée de Sologne**, whose

exhibits explain the economy and wildlife of the area.

St-Viâtre, just north of Romorantin-Lanthenay, is a centre for bird-watching on the *étangs* of Brosse, Grande Corbois, Favelle, Marcilly and Margailliärs. The **Maison des Etangs** at St-Viâtre gives guidance on ornithology.

For game, there are observation hides in the park of Chambord (see pp134–5), where deer can often be seen – and heard in the autumn rutting season. Another large, public nature reserve is the **Domaine du Ciran**, 25 km (15 miles) south of Orléans, near Ménestreau-en-Villette.

📍 Musée de Sologne

Tel 02 54 95 33 66. ☐ daily. 📺 Tue, Sun am; 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec. 📺 📺

📍 Maison des Etangs

Tel 02 54 88 23 00. ☐ daily (Nov–Mar: Wed, Sat, Sun & pub hols, pm only). 📺 1 Jan, 25 Dec. 📺

📍 Domaine du Ciran

Ménestreau-en-Villette. 📍 La Ferté-St-Aubin, then taxi. 📍 02 38 76 90 93. ☐ daily. 📺 Tue (Oct–Mar). 📺



A typical, half-timbered building of La Sologne



BERRY

Berry lies in the very centre of France, south of the Paris Basin and just north of the Massif Central. It is a varied land of wheat fields, pastures and vineyards, ancient forests, rolling hills and lakes, peaceful villages and elegant manor houses. Mainly off the beaten tourist track, the region gives visitors an opportunity to experience the rural heart of France.

Bourges, the principal town of Berry, was one of the capitals of Aquitaine in the Gallo-Roman period. It then enjoyed another moment of glory in the 14th century, with the administration of Jean, Duc de Berry. This warmongering patron of the arts built a splendid palace in the city (now destroyed) and collected paintings, tapestries, jewellery and illuminated manuscripts.

In the 1420s, when Charles VII was fighting for the French crown (see pp52–3), Bourges was his campaign base. Afterwards, his treasurer Jacques Cœur did much to make the kingdom financially secure. The Palais Jacques-Cœur in Bourges competes with the city's magnificent cathedral in drawing crowds of admiring visitors.



Berry is ideal for those who love the outdoors, whether walking in the many well-tended forests, fishing or bird-watching in La Brenne, or sailing and canoeing on its rivers and lakes. Among the region's literary associations are George Sand's novels (see p24) and Alain-Fournier's evocative tale *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913), which combines his childhood memories of the Sologne in the north and the rolling country of the south.

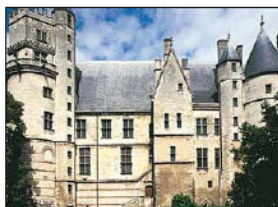
The culinary highlights of Berry include dishes made from local game and wild mushrooms. To the north-east, the renowned Sancerre wine district (see p155) is also known for its excellent goats' cheeses, such as the famous Crottin de Chavignol.



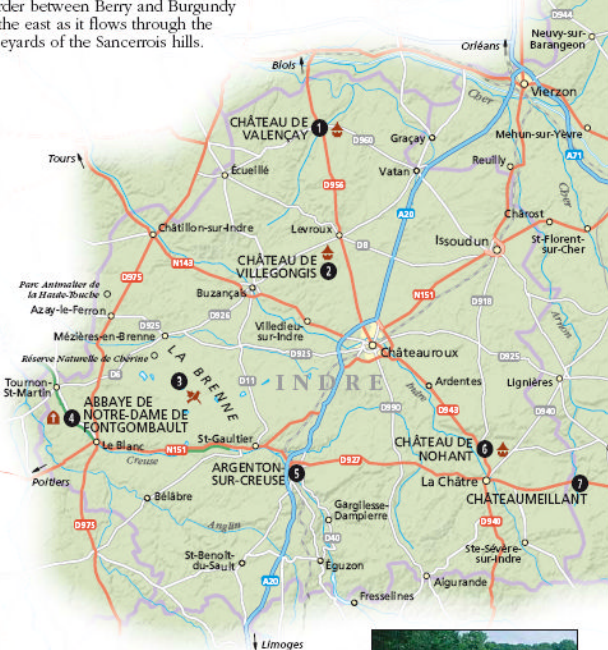
A river view by the village of Argenton-sur-Creuse

Exploring Berry

Bourges is the natural starting point for exploring the heart of France. From here it is only a short drive to the edge of the Sologne (see p141) in the north or La Brenne in the southeast, both havens for wildlife. Below Bourges is the Champagne Berrichonne, a vast agricultural region producing wheat, barley and oil-rich crops such as rape and sunflowers. The River Loire forms the ancient border between Berry and Burgundy to the east as it flows through the vineyards of the Sancerrois hills.



The Palais Jacques-Cœur in Bourges



GETTING AROUND

The A71 autoroute from Paris passes through Vierzon, Bourges and St-Amand-Montrond and is an excellent way of travelling from north to south. The TGV does not stop in the region, but Corail trains from Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris take around two hours to

either Bourges or Châteaoux. There are also frequent trains between Bourges and Tours. Public transport to the more isolated sights is limited and a car is a great advantage, especially when touring the Sancerre wine estates or La Brenne nature reserves.



A riverside scene, typical of the Berry region's gentle landscape



SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- Amay-le-Vieil 1
- Argenton-sur-Creuse 5
- Aubigny-sur-Nère 3
- Bourges pp150-3 2
- La Brenne 3
- Châteaumeillant 7
- Culan 8
- Fongombault 4
- Meillant 11
- Nohant 6
- Noiriac 10
- Sancerre 15
- Valençay 1
- La Verrerie 12
- Villegongis 2

- Tour
- Wine and Cheese Tour 16

SEE ALSO

- Where to Stay pp205-6
- Where to Eat pp217-18



The hilltop town of Sancerre, surrounded by vineyards



A resident peacock in front of the Château de Valençay

Valençay ①

Road map E4. 3,000. **Valençay.** 2 ave de la Résistance (02 54 00 04 42). **Tue. Château & Park** **Tel** 02 54 00 10 66. Apr–Oct: daily. restricted. *A Day with Prince Talleyrand* (Easter–Sep: weekends & pub hols; Jul & Aug: daily); *Son et Lumière: Valençay aux Chandelles* (mid-Jun–Aug: weekly). **Musée de l'Automobile** **Tel** 02 54 00 07 74. Apr–Oct: daily. **www.** pays-de-valençay.fr; **www.**chateau-valençay.com

From its tree-lined approach, the Château de Valençay is a fine sight. Started in 1510, it took more than 300 years to complete, but its Renaissance and Classical elements are convincingly blended. In 1803, it was bought by Bonaparte's foreign minister, Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand Périgord. Until his death in 1838, the famous statesman entertained many of Europe's dignitaries here.

Valençay's rooms are richly furnished, mostly in the Empire style, and they display many *objets d'art* connected with Talleyrand. Indeed, in summer, visitors can spend time in the great man's company, with members of his entourage, including his famous chef, Carême. Formal gardens extend in front of the chateau, while the park itself houses an enormous labyrinth.

Next to the chateau, the **Musée de l'Automobile** has a private collection of motoring memorabilia and vintage cars (all in working order).

Château de Villegongis ②

Road map E4. Châteauroux, then taxi. **Tel** 02 54 36 60 51. closed to public until further notice.

Elegant and moated, the Château de Villegongis was probably built by Pierre Nepveu, one of the master masons for Chambord (see pp132–5). Since the 15th century, ownership has stayed in the same family. Barely touched since that time, it is one of the purest examples of the French Renaissance style.

The chateau's most striking features are its richly decorated chimneys, which suggest the link with Chambord, and its cylindrical towers at either end of the main building.

The interior is exceptionally well furnished, with some fine 17th- and 18th-century pieces. There is also a remarkable carved stone staircase.

La Brenne ③

Road map E4. Mézières-en-Brenne, then taxi. **Maison du Parc, Rosnay** (02 54 28 12 13); Mézières-en-Brenne (02 54 38 12 24). **www.**parc-naturel-brenne.fr

The Parc Naturel Régional de la Brenne, covering 165,000 ha (407,700 acres), is better known as the *Pays des Mille Etangs* (The Land of a Thousand Meres). A beautiful region of lakes and wooded hills, La Brenne is a paradise for nature lovers. It has been estimated that more than 260 of the 450 bird species known in Europe can be seen here.

Several specialist reserves are open to visitors, such as the **Réserve Naturelle de Chérine**, good for spotting European pond tortoises, and the **Parc Animalier de la Haute-Touche**, home to many endangered species. The town of Mézières-en-Brenne houses the **Maison de la Pisciculture**, whose aquaria display local fish species.

Réserve Naturelle de Chérine

St-Michel-en-Brenne. 02 54 28 11 00. **Observatory** daily. by appt only, Apr–Jul: Thu pm.

Parc Animalier de la Haute-Touche

Obterre. **Tel** 02 54 02 20 40. Apr–Aug: daily; Sep–mid-Nov: Wed, Sat, Sun & pub hols.

Maison de la Pisciculture

Mézières-en-Brenne. **Tel** 02 54 38 12 99. Apr–Oct: Mon & Wed–Sat, pm only; Nov–Mar: by appt. grd fir only.



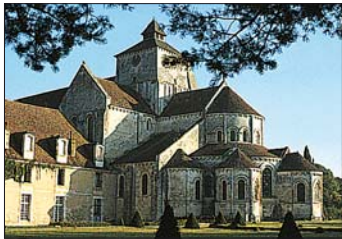
One of the many idyllic lakes in La Brenne

Abbaye de Notre-Dame de Fontgombault 4

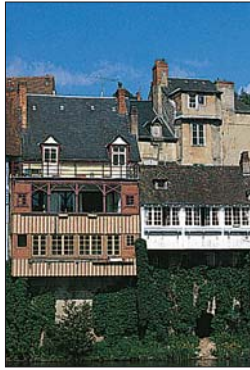
Road map E4. Tel 02 54 37 12 03, 02 54 37 30 98. ☉ daily. 🇫 Mass: 10am daily; Vespers: 6pm Mon–Sat, 5pm Sun. ♿

The beautiful Benedictine **Abbaye de Notre-Dame de Fontgombault**, famous for its Gregorian chant, was founded in 1091 but, by 1741, when the number of monks had dwindled to just five, it was abandoned. Restored by a local priest in the 19th century, it now houses monks from Solesmes (see p162).

The church, with its five radiating chapels, has a richly decorated doorway, carved capitals and a much-venerated 12th-century statue known as Notre-Dame du Bien-Mourir, believed to comfort the dying. Gregorian chant is still sung during services and is more prominent in the morning service. The monks run a pottery, whose products can be bought from the exhibition centre beside the church.



The radiating chapels of the Abbaye de Notre-Dame de Fontgombault



Old houses overhanging the river in Argenton-sur-Creuse

Argenton-sur-Creuse 5

Road map E4. 🇫 5,200. 🇫 🇫 🇫
 🇫 pl de la République (02 54 24 05 30). 🇫 Thu & Sat. 🇫 International Folklore Festival, biennial (Jul).
 www.ot-argenton-sur-creuse.fr

Argenton-Sur-Creuse is a pretty town along the river, which winds from Fresselines to Argenton, passing through deep gorges. Streets of picturesque houses climb the hillside to Argenton's chapel of Notre-Dame-des-Bancs, dominated by its 6-m (20-ft) gilded statue of the Virgin Mary. There are fine views from here and from the Vieux Pont, a medieval bridge.

In the 19th century, the town became an important centre for

the clothing industry. The informative collections of the **Musée de la Chemiserie et de l'Élégance Masculine** honour this heritage.

🇫 Musée de la Chemiserie et de l'Élégance Masculine
 Tel 02 54 24 34 69.

☉ mid-Feb–Dec: Tue–Sun. ♿

Château de Nohant 6

Road map E4. Tel 02 54 31 06 04.
 🇫 Châteauroux. ☉ daily.
 🇫 public hols. 🇫 🇫 Fêtes Romantiques de Nohant (Jun); Rencontres Internationales Frédéric Chopin (Jul). 🇫 02 54 31 0737.

George Sand, the *nom de plume* of the celebrated novelist, Baroness Aurore Dudevant (1804–76), was largely brought up in this charming manor house beside a tiny Romanesque church. She frequently returned here during her eventful and unconventional life, to enjoy the calm and beauty of her beloved Berry countryside.

Many of George Sand's novels, including *La Mare au Diable* (*The Devil's Pool*) and *La Petite Fadette* (*The Little Fairy*), are set here (see p24). Sand's admirers can view the boudoir where she first wrote, at a desk inside a cupboard; the stage on which she and her guests acted out her plays; the puppets made by her son, Maurice; the bedroom used by her lover, Frédéric Chopin; and the room in which she died in 1876.

MONET AT FRESSELINES

In 1889 the Impressionist painter Claude Monet travelled to the village of Fresselines, perched high above the Creuse. He visited a local beauty spot, with views plunging down into the river gorge, was captivated, and painted a series of canvases showing the scene in different lights. In February, bad weather forced him to stop painting and wait for spring. He then found that new growth had changed the view and had to pay the owner of an oak featured in five of his paintings to strip the tree of its new leaves.



Valley of the Petite Creuse by Claude Monet

Châteaumeillant 7

Road Map F4. 2,050.

Chateauroux, then bus.

rue de la Libération (02 48 61 39 89). Fri.

The chief glory of this town is the Romanesque **Eglise St-Genès**, built between 1125 and 1150, with its elegant pink and grey west façade. The interior is exceptionally airy, due not only to its great height, but also to its very wide chancel with six apsidal chapels and side passages that are separated by graceful double bays to create a cloisters effect.

Châteaumeillant was once an important Gallo-Roman center. The **Musée Emile-Chenon**, based in a 15th-century manor house, contains Roman artifacts and local medieval finds.

Musée Emile-Chenon

rue de la Victoire (02 48 61 49 24). Mon pm, Wed am, Thu–Sat (Jun–Sep: daily).

Château de Culan 8

Road Map F4. **Tel** 02 48 56 66 66.

Apr–Oct: daily.

www.culan.fr

Strategically positioned on an escarpment above the River Arnon, this medieval fortress dates from the 13th and 14th centuries. Its three conical towers are topped by wooden siege hoardings. A series of furnished rooms relate the castle's long history,



The Château de Culan, set high above the River Arnon



The interior courtyard of the Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil

recalling famous visitors who have stayed there, including the Admiral of Culan, who was a comrade-in-arms of Joan of Arc (who also stayed there in 1430), and the writers George Sand (see p24) and Madame de Sévigné, and telling of an attack during the 17th-century Fronde uprising.

Lovely views over Culan's newly replanted gardens and the pastoral Arnon Valley can be enjoyed from the terrace of the château.

Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil 9

Road Map F4. St-Amand-Mont-rond, then taxi. **Tel** 02 48 63 50 03.

Feb: Wed–Mon pms; Mar, Oct

& Nov: Wed–Mon; Apr–Sep: daily.

From the outside, Ainay-le-Vieil has the appearance of a fortress, with formidable walls and its nine massive towers, lit only by thin arrow

slits. The octagonal enclosure, surrounded by a moat, is entered through a huge, 13th-century postern gate. The exterior belies the fact that hidden inside is a graceful Renaissance château designed for an elegant lifestyle, with its richly decorated façade enlivened by sunny loggias.

The castle changed hands many times during its early history. In the 15th century, it belonged briefly to Charles VII's treasurer Jacques Cœur (see p151), but in 1467 it was bought by the Seigneurs de Bigny whose descendants still live here today.

The Grand Salon was decorated in honour of a visit by Louis XII and Anne of Brittany around 1500. It has a painted ceiling and a monumental fireplace, which is said to be one of the most attractive in the Loire Valley. On display is a portrait of Louis XIV's chief minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert and portraits of other family members, as well as an amber pendant that belonged to Queen Marie-Antoinette and several *objets de vertu*, friendship gifts given by Napoleon to General Auguste Colbert.

The tiny Renaissance chapel has some beautiful, late 16th-century wall paintings, which were discovered under 19th-century decoration. Its stained-glass windows were made by an artist who also worked on the Cathédrale St-Etienne in Bourges (see pp152–3).

In the park is a delightful and sweet-smelling rose garden. Some of the varieties of roses which are grown here date back to the 15th century.

Abbaye de Noirlac ¹⁰

Road map F4. St-Amand-Montrond, then taxi. **Tel** 02 48 62 01 01. daily. 23 Dec–Jan. L'Été de Noirlac (concerts; weekends in Jul). **www.abbayedenoirlac.com**

The Cistercian Abbaye de Noirlac, founded in 1136, is a fine example of medieval monastic architecture. The Cistercian Order's austerity is reflected in the pure lines of the partly 12th-century church and visually echoed in its sober, modern stained glass.

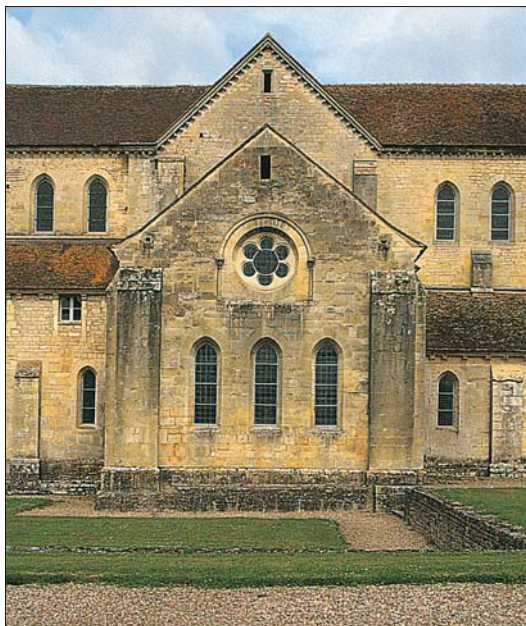
The chapter house, where the monks' daily assemblies were held, and the *cellier*, where the lay brothers were in charge of the food, wine and grain stores, were also built in this plain but elegant style. The cloisters, with their graceful arches and decorated capitals, date from the 13th and 14th centuries, which was a less severe period.

At **Bruère-Allichamps**, 4 km (2½ miles) northwest of the abbey, a Gallo-Roman milestone marks the alleged exact central point of France.

Château de Meillant ¹¹

Road map F4. St-Amand-Montrond, then taxi. **Tel** 02 48 63 32 05. Mar–mid-Nov: daily. grd flr only. **www.chateau-de-meillant.com**

Sumptuously furnished rooms and elaborate carved ceilings complement the rather



The austere lines of the Abbaye de Noirlac

exuberantly decorated façade of this well-preserved Berry château. Built for Charles d'Amboise in 1510 by skilful Italian craftsmen, the château represents a fine combination of late Gothic and early Renaissance architecture. It is dominated by the *Tour de Lion* (Lion's Tower), an octagonal three-storey staircase tower. The plainer west façade, mirrored in a moat, dates from the early 1300s.

Other highlights of a visit include the château's graceful chapel and its surrounding grounds in which peacocks strut. The grounds also feature **La Mini'stoire**, an interesting miniature park, where models of buildings depict the ways in which architectural styles have varied over the centuries.



A small grotesque carving in Meillant

La Mini'stoire

Tel 02 48 63 32 05.
 Mar–mid-Nov: daily.

LIFE IN A CISTERCIAN ABBEY

The rules of the Cistercian Order were based on the principles of austerity and simplicity. Abbeys were divided into two communities, which did not mix. Lay brothers, not bound by holy vows, ensured the self-sufficiency of the abbey by managing the barns, tilling the fields, milling corn and welcoming guests. The full, or choir, monks were the only ones allowed into the cloister, at the heart of the



A Cistercian monk labouring in the fields

complex, and could not leave the abbey without the permission of the abbot.

The monks' days started at 2am and ended at 7pm and were regularly punctuated by religious devotions, which included prayers, confession, meditation and mass.

The strict rule of silence was broken only to read from the Bible or from the Rules of the Order. Many monks were literate, and monasteries played a leading role in copying manuscripts.

Bourges 12

The heart of modern Bourges, once the Roman city of Avaricum, is the network of ancient streets around its magnificent cathedral. Despite a dramatic fire in 1487, the city was an important religious and arts centre in the Middle Ages and, by the late 19th century, it was a prosperous industrial town. Today Bourges has a quiet atmosphere that complements its excellent museums, housed in superb old buildings. It comes to life in the spring during the *Printemps de Bourges*, a rock festival attracting a large, predominantly young audience.



The 16th-century *Concert Champêtre*, displayed in the Hôtel Lallemant

🏠 Hôtel des Echevins & Musée Estève

13 rue Edouard Branly. **Tel** 02 48 24 75 38. ☐ Mon, Wed–Sat; Sun pm only. 🗓 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov & 25 Dec. ♿

The Hôtel des Echevins (the house of the aldermen), which is remarkable for its intricately carved octagonal tower, was

built in 1489 and served as the seat of the city council that governed Bourges for more than three centuries.

The building was classified an historic monument in 1886. In 1985 work to renovate the building began, and in 1987 it became the Musée Estève, displaying paintings by the

self-taught artist Maurice Estève, who was born in Culan in the south of Berry (see p148). The collection is mainly made up of Estève's powerful, brightly coloured canvases. However, this permanent display is augmented by temporary exhibitions of his watercolours, collages and line drawings. The collection is arranged in chronological order on three levels, connected by elegant stone spiral staircases. This modern work seems surprisingly at home in the spacious Gothic rooms.



Samsara by Maurice Estève (1977)

🏠 Hôtel Lallemant & Musée des Arts Décoratifs

6 rue Bourbonnoux. **Tel** 02 48 57 81 17. ☐ Tue–Sat; Sun pm only. 🗓 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov & 25 Dec.

This Renaissance mansion, built for a rich merchant family originally from Germany, houses the city's decorative arts museum. It still has the little chapel used by the Lallemant family, its coffered ceiling carved with alchemical symbols, and an elegant, restored courtyard. On display is a fine collection of tapestries, clocks, ceramics, glass, paintings and furniture, including a beautiful 17th-century ebony inlaid cabinet. In another part of the mansion, there is a collection of toys dating from the 17th century to the present.

🏠 Musée du Berry

4–6 rue des Arènes. **Tel** 02 48 70 41 92. ☐ Mon, Wed–Sat; Sun pm only. 🗓 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov & 25 Dec. ♿ grd flr only.

The Musée du Berry, housed in the Renaissance Hôtel Cujas, concentrates on local history. The collections include a large display of Gallo-Roman artifacts, many of which were unearthed in the area. There is some wonderful Gothic sculpture, especially Jean de Cambrai's weeping figures from the base of the tomb of Jean, Duc de Berry, the upper section of which can be seen in the crypt of the Cathédrale St-Etienne (see pp152–3).

On the upper floor of the museum is a permanent exhibition of Berry's rural arts, crafts, and everyday objects, including the distinctive stoneware made in La Borne near Sancerre.

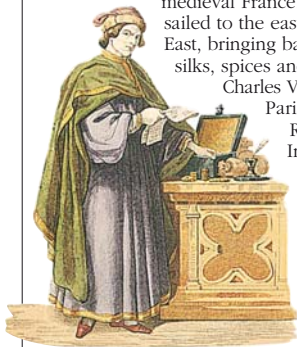


Jehan Fouquet's Angel Ceiling in the Palais Jaques-Cœur

JACQUES CŒUR

The son of a Bourges furrier, Jacques Cœur (c.1400–56) became one of the richest and most powerful men in medieval France. With his merchant fleet he sailed to the eastern Mediterranean and Far East, bringing back luxury goods such as silks, spices and precious metals, until Charles VII appointed him head of the Paris Mint, then treasurer of the Royal Household.

In 1451 he was accused of fraud and falsely implicated in the death of the king's mistress, Agnès Sorel. He was arrested, tortured and imprisoned, but escaped to Rome. There he took part in the pope's naval expedition against the Turks and died on the Greek island of Chios.



The merchant Jacques Cœur

Palais Jacques-Cœur

Rue Jacques-Cœur. **Tel** 02 48 24 79 42. ☐ daily. 🗓 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec. 📷 📺

This splendid palace, built on the remains of the city's Gallo-Roman walls, is among the finest secular Gothic buildings in Europe. It was constructed at great expense between 1443 and 1451 for Jacques Cœur, one of the most fascinating men in medieval France.

The palace has a number of innovations remarkable for their period. Rooms open off

corridors instead of leading into each other, as they did in most buildings at the time, and a stone lavatory shows that sanitation was a consideration. Appealingly, each room is "labelled" over the doorway with carved scenes that illustrate its function.

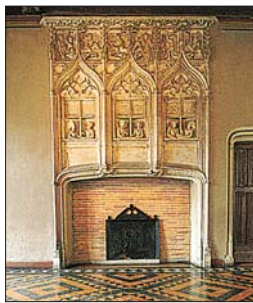
From *trompe l'oeil* figures peeping out from the turreted entrance façade to the mysterious, possibly alchemical, symbols carved everywhere, the palace offers a feast of interesting details. Hearts are

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map F4. 🗺 100.000.

📍 *pl Général Leclerc*. 🚶 *rue du Prado*. 📍 *21 rue Victor Hugo* (02 48 23 02 60). 🕒 *Thu, Sat–Sun*. 📺 *Printemps de Bourges* (Apr); *Son et Lumière: Les Nuits Lumière* (May, Jun & Sep); *Thu–Sat; Jul & Aug: daily*; *Été à Bourges* (street festival, 21 Jun–21 Sep).

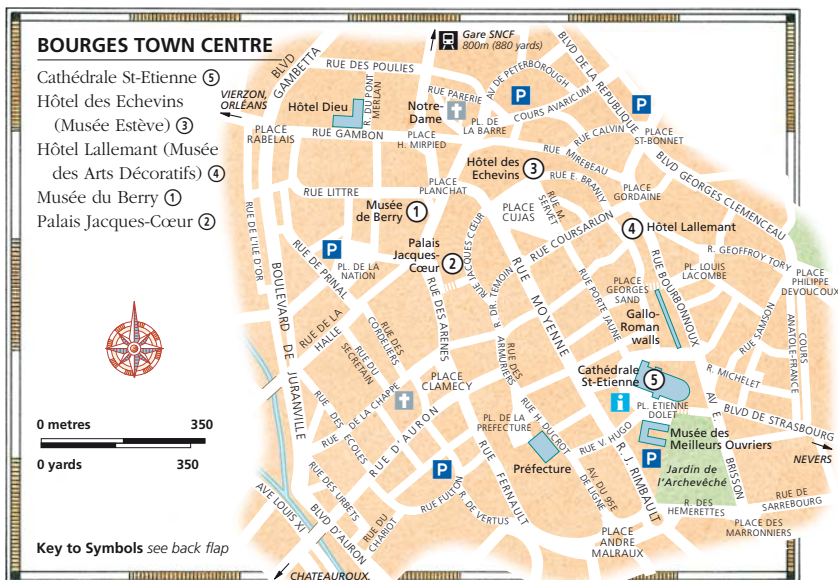
www.bourgestourisme.com



The fireplace in the south gallery of the Palais Jacques-Cœur

a common motif – the newly ennobled Jacques Cœur naturally had hearts, *cœurs* in French, on his coat of arms.

Other features are a large courtyard, wooden vaulting in the galleries, and the beautiful ceiling in the chapel, painted by Jehan Fouquet (see p25).



Bourges: Cathédrale St-Etienne



Stained-glass window detail

St-Etienne, one of France's finest Gothic cathedrals, was built mainly between 1195 and 1260. The unknown architect designed St-Etienne without transepts, which, combined with the interior's unusual height and width, makes it seem much lighter than most Gothic cathedrals. This effect is beautifully enhanced by the brilliant hues of the medieval stained glass. Also unusual are the asymmetrical west front; the double row of flying buttresses rising in pyramid-shaped tiers; and a "crypt", a lower, window-lit church, created because the ground is 6 m (20 ft) lower at the east end.



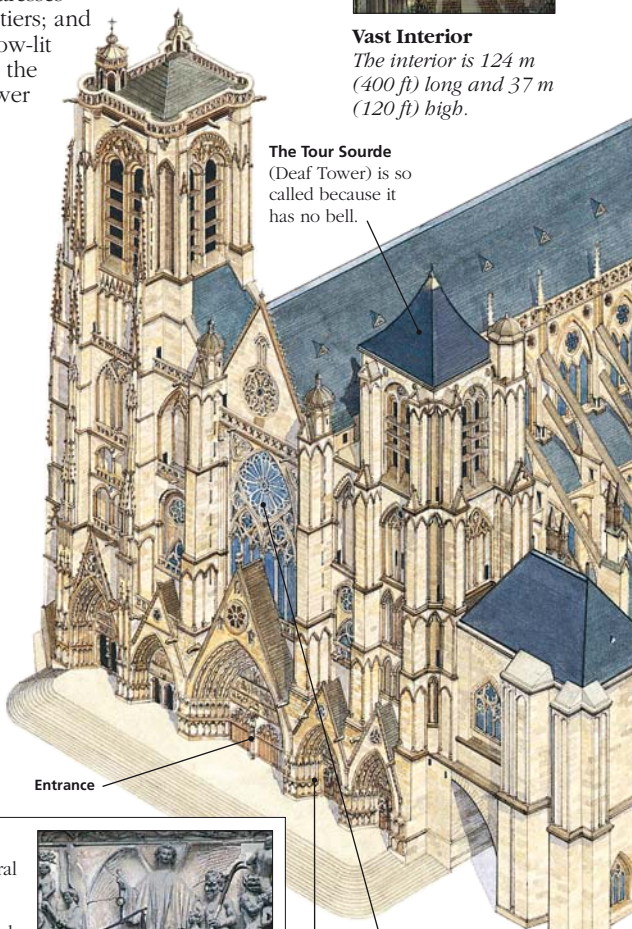
Vast Interior

The interior is 124 m (400 ft) long and 37 m (120 ft) high.



★ Astrological Clock

Dating from the 1420s, this fascinating clock was designed by Canon Jean Fusoris, a mathematician.



The Tour Sourd

(Deaf Tower) is so called because it has no bell.

Entrance

The Grand Housseau is a striking rose window, donated by the renowned patron of the arts Jean, Duc de Berry.

THE LAST JUDGMENT

The tympanum on the central portal of the west façade depicts Archangel Michael weighing souls. Those found wanting are hustled by devils into the mouth of Hell, while the elect are gathered into the bosom of Abraham. The youthful, naked dead lift up their tombstones in a dramatic Resurrection scene.

The Last Judgement portal of the Cathédrale St-Etienne



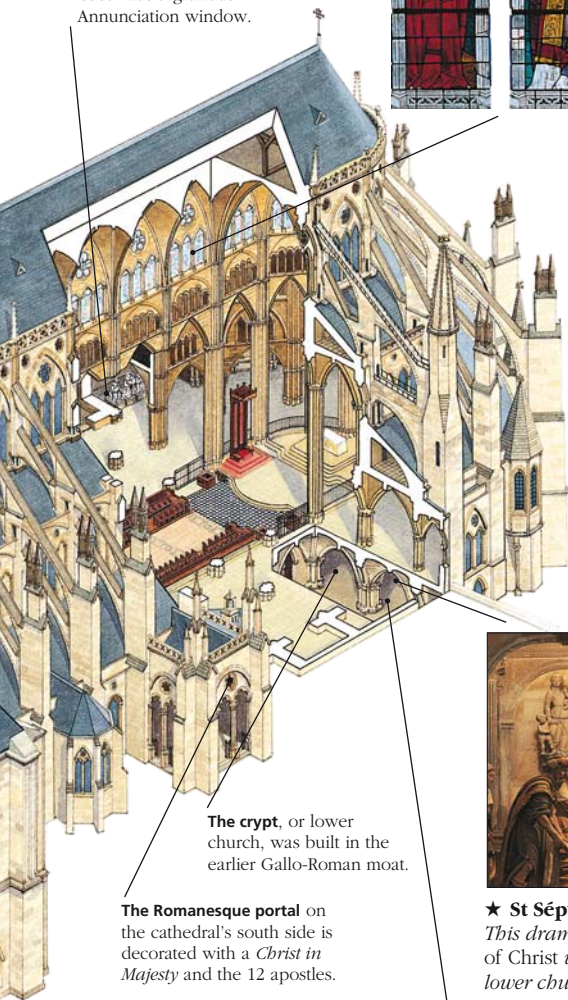
The five portals of the west front are surrounded by carved scenes. The doorways vary in size and shape, adding to the asymmetry of the façade.

★ Stained-Glass Windows

The medieval stained glass in the choir was sponsored by local guilds, whose members are depicted practising their crafts at the bottom of each window.



The Chapelle Jacques-Coeur has a glorious Annunciation window.



The crypt, or lower church, was built in the earlier Gallo-Roman moat.

The Romanesque portal on the cathedral's south side is decorated with a *Christ in Majesty* and the 12 apostles.

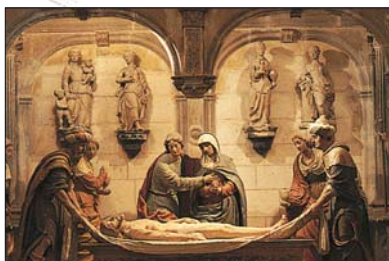
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Pl Etienne Dolet. **Tel** 02 48 23 02 60. ☐ 8:30am–7pm daily (Oct–Mar: 9am–5:30pm). 🗺️ 📶 11am Sun; 6:30pm daily (Jul & Aug). **Crypt** ☐ 10–11:30am, 2–5pm Mon–Sat; 2–5pm Sun. 📷 📱 📺



Praying Figures

In the crypt are statues of the Duc and Duchesse de Berry. During the Revolution the statues were decapitated and the existing heads are copies.



★ St Sépulcre

This dramatic sculpture of the Entombment of Christ was placed at the far end of the lower church in 1540.

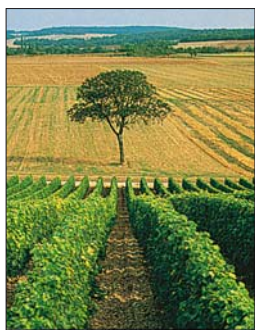
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Astrological Clock
- ★ Stained-Glass Windows
- ★ St Sépulcre



Jean, Duc de Berry

The recumbent marble effigy of Jean, Duc de Berry, his feet resting on a bear, was originally part of his tomb.



A Sancerre vineyard

Sancerre 13

Road map F3. 1,800. **esplanade Porte-César** (02 48 54 08 21). **Mon & Sat.** **Foire aux Crottins** (goat's cheese fair, early May); **Foire aux Vins** (wine fair, Whitsun); **Foire aux Vins de France** (French wine fair, late Aug). www.ville-sancerre.com

The ancient Berry town of Sancerre is perched on a domed hill, a rare sight in the flat landscape of the Loire Valley. Its narrow streets boast interesting 15th- and 16th-century houses. All that remains of the medieval castle that once dominated the town is the **Tour des Fiefs**, which gives a superb view of the River Loire. The town and surrounding area are famous for their dry white wines.

Located in a lovely pastoral setting, 10 km (6 miles) to the west of Sancerre, the **Château de Boucard** is part medieval in origin, but has an elegant Renaissance courtyard.

Tour des Fiefs

Easter–15 May & 15 Sep–11 Nov: Sat, Sun & pub hols pm; **15 May–15 Sep: daily pm.**

Château de Boucard

Le Noyer. **Tel** 02 48 58 75 49. **Easter–Nov: Fri–Wed.**

Château de la Verrerie 14

Road map F3. **Gien, then taxi.** **Tel** 02 48 81 51 60. **Easter–Nov: daily.** See **Where to Stay**, p.205.

This fine, early Renaissance château is on the edge of the Forêt d'Ivoy. The land was given to the Scot Sir John

Stewart of Darnley by Charles VII, in thanks for defeating the English at the battle of Baugé in 1421. John's son, Béraud Stewart, began to build the château several decades later. It was completed by Béraud's nephew, Robert.

La Verrerie reverted to the French crown in 1670. Three years later Louis XIV gave the château to Louise de Kéroualle. She lived here until her death in 1734 at the age of 85.

La Verrerie has a lovely Renaissance gallery with 16th-century frescoes. The chapel also has fine frescoes, which date from the same period. In the 19th-century wing are four beautiful alabaster statuettes from the tomb of the Duc de Berry (see pp152–3).

The grounds have a good restaurant and 12 of the château's rooms are available for visitors to stay overnight.



Alabaster statuettes in the Château de la Verrerie's 19th-century wing

Aubigny-sur-Nère 15

Road map F3. 6,000. **rue de l'Eglise** (02 48 58 40 20). **Sat.** **Fête Franco-Ecossaise** (mid-Jul). www.aubigny-sur-nere.fr

Attractive Aubigny is proud of its association with the Scottish Stewart clan. In 1423 the town was given by Charles VII to Sir John Stewart of Darnley, along with nearby La Verrerie. After a major fire in 1512, the Stewarts rebuilt Aubigny in the Renaissance style and also constructed a new château.

In 1673 Louis XIV gave the duchy of Aubigny to Louise de Kéroualle. Although she spent most of her

time at La Verrerie, Louise had a large garden created at the Château d'Aubigny. The Aubusson tapestries presented to her by the king are displayed in the château, which now serves as the town hall and also houses two museums. The unusual **Mémorial de l'Auld Alliance** is devoted to the Auld Alliance, the town's long ties with Scotland: Jacobite refugees settled here during the 18th century.

The 13th-century **Eglise St-Martin**, in transitional Gothic style, was largely rebuilt by the Stewarts. It has a beautiful wooden Pieta and a moving 16th-century Entombment.

Berry has a reputation for sorcery, a tradition well illustrated in Concessault's lively **Musée de la Sorcellerie**, 10 km (6 miles) east of Aubigny. Here waxworks bring to life the history of herbalism, healing and magic, and portray the gruesome fate of those accused of witchcraft during the Inquisition.

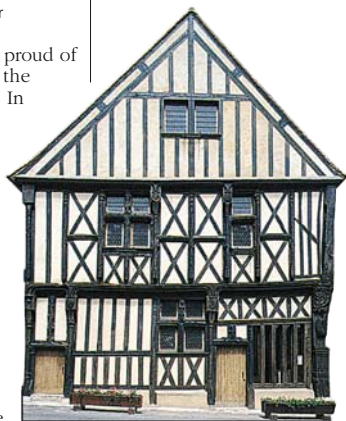
Mémorial de l'Auld Alliance & Musée Marguerite-Audoux

Château d'Aubigny. **Tel** 02 48 81 50 07. **Easter–Jun & mid-Sep–Oct: Sat, Sun & public hols pms only;** **Jul–mid-Sep: daily;** **Nov–Easter: Sun pm & public hols.**

Mémorial de l'Auld Alliance only.

Musée de la Sorcellerie

La Jonchère, Concessault. **Tel** 02 48 73 86 11. **Easter–Oct: daily.** www.musee-sorcellerie.fr



The Maison de François I, one of the many old houses in Aubigny-sur-Nère

Wine and Cheese Tour 16

The Sancerrois in eastern Berry is renowned for its wines and goats' cheese. Gourmets can visit the top-class Sancerre caves and taste the fresh and fragrant white wines made from the Sauvignon grape, or charming light reds and rosés made from the Pinot Noir. The flavours combine beautifully



Sancerre wine

with the sharp little goats' cheeses called Crottins de Chavignol, which are also produced locally. This rural route passes by gently hilly vineyards and fields of grazing red goats. It takes in the locales of many of the major producers, as well as a few local museums that explain the long history of both wine and cheese.

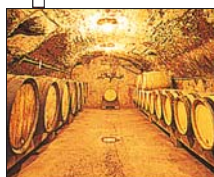
Verdigny ⑥

The Musée de la Vigne et du Vin charts the history of winemaking in the area. Exhibits include an ancient wooden wine press.



Chavignol ⑤

This pretty town gives its name to the little cheeses. An exhibition at the cheese shop Dubois-Boulay relates the history of the cheese.



Bué ④

Many vintners are based in and around this important *commune viticole*, including Crochet, Balland and Roger.

TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Tour length: 30 km (19 miles).
Stopping-off points: Motorists should have little trouble spotting places to stop and sample wine and cheese. *Les Augustins* and *La Pomme d'Or* (see p218) in Sancerre are recommended.

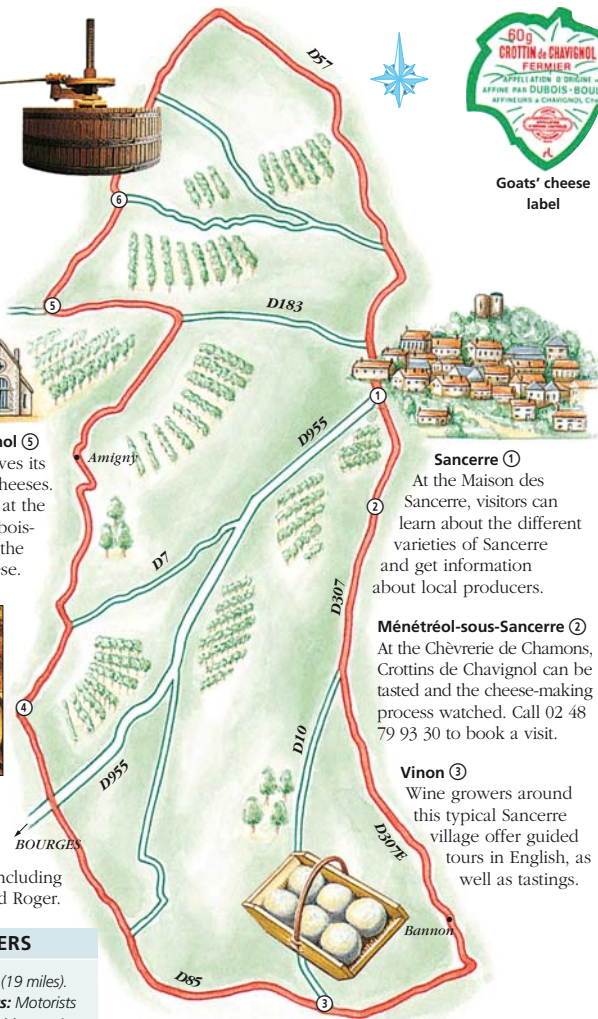
KEY

 Tour route

 Other roads



Goats' cheese label



Sancerre ①

At the Maison des Sancerre, visitors can learn about the different varieties of Sancerre and get information about local producers.

Ménétréol-sous-Sancerre ②

At the Chèverrie de Chamons, Crottins de Chavignol can be tasted and the cheese-making process watched. Call 02 48 79 93 30 to book a visit.

Vinon ③

Wine growers around this typical Sancerre village offer guided tours in English, as well as tastings.



NORTH OF THE LOIRE

The peaceful Mayenne and Sarthe regions seem worlds away from the tourist-frequented *château* country of the central Loire Valley. A grouping of districts with little common history, the area north of the Loire has very different attractions from the former royal domains to the south. The rivers, hills, forests and plains abound with opportunities for fishing, boating and country walks.

River boats cruise along the quiet Sarthe, through pretty wooded scenery and meadowlands, to Sablé-sur-Sarthe, near the Abbaye de Solesmes, famous for its tradition of superb Gregorian chant.

The more dramatic scenery of the Mayenne valley, from Laval southwards, with steep cliffs and villages perched on wooded hills, makes a pleasant spot for a restful break from *château*-visiting. The river, studded with locks, runs into the Maine and then into the Loire, a pattern also followed by the Loir (Le Loir, which is not to be confused with La Loire).

The valley of the Loir is also very pretty, the slow-moving river flowing through peaceful villages. It is a perfect place for relaxing and enjoying the countryside. The valley also offers a few spectacular sights of its own, including the *château* at Le Lude, with



its four imposing corner towers and the stern-faced *château* of *Châteaudun* further upstream, which was once a stronghold of the counts of Blois. Le Mans,

world famous for its 24-hour car race, also has an attractive old centre. East of Le Mans, gentle scenery gives way first to the wooded hills of the Perche and then to the vast wheat-fields on the plain of the Beauce, which is dominated by the magnificent cathedral at Chartres. Two lovely *châteaux*, Anet and Maintenon, were homes to royal mistresses: Diane de Poitiers (*see p55*), mistress of Henri II, retreated to Anet, and Madame de Maintenon was the mistress of Louis XIV. Like Chartres Cathedral, these great houses stand on the edge of the Ile de France, the region around Paris, so they attract many day visitors from the country's capital.



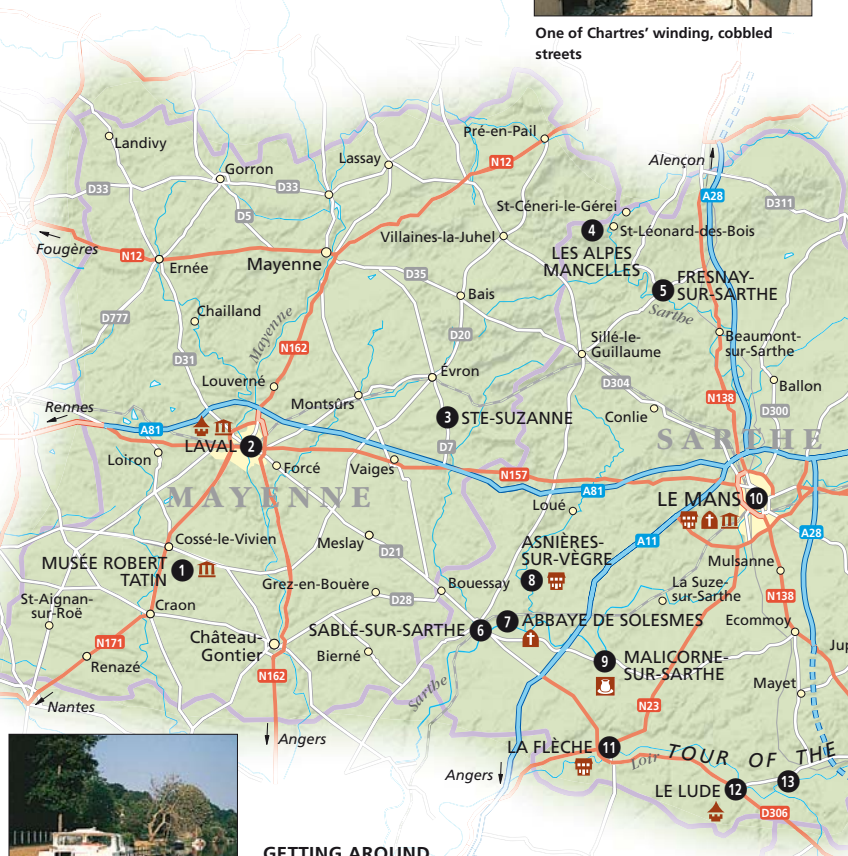
Clog-making at the woodwork centre in Jupilles in the Forêt de Bercé

Exploring the North of the Loire

Consisting of the *départements* of Mayenne, Sarthe and Eure-et-Loire, the region north of the Loire borders Brittany, Normandy and the Ile de France. It combines characteristics of all these regions with those of the central Loire Valley. In the north, the hills of the Alpes Mancelles have more in common with the landscapes of Normandy than they do with the rolling fields further south. The rivers traversing the region – the Loir, Sarthe and Mayenne – are smaller and gentler than the mighty Loire but still very scenic. The largest towns in the region are Chartres, Le Mans and Laval, all of them worth a visit.



One of Chartres' winding, cobbled streets










Cruising on the River Sarthe, upstream from Sablé

GETTING AROUND

Chartres and Le Mans are both reached from Paris by the A11 autoroute (*L'Océane*), which continues to Angers. The A81 crosses the region from Le Mans to Laval, while the A28 cuts north-south from Alençon to Tours. Trains from Paris are frequent: the TGV takes 55

minutes to Le Mans, and regional express trains take 60 minutes to Chartres. From Chartres to Le Mans is about 90 minutes. Buses link most of the main towns in the region but are less regular during school holidays. Boating is one of the best ways of seeing the countryside.

KEY

-  Motorway
-  Major road
-  Secondary road
-  Minor road
-  Road under construction
-  Scenic route
-  Main railway
-  Minor railway
-  Regional border



The waterfront at Malicorne-sur-Sarthe

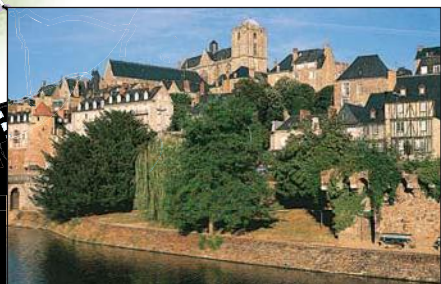
EURE-ET-LOIR

SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- Abbaye de Solesmes
- Les Alpes Mancelles 4
- Anet 17
- Asnières-sur-Vègre 8
- Chartres pp171-5 18
- Chateaudun 15
- Courtanvaux 14
- La Flèche 11
- Presnay-sur-Sarthe 5
- Illiers-Combray 16
- Laval 2
- Le Lude 7
- Malicorne-sur-Sarthe 9
- Le Mans pp164-7 10
- Musée Robert Tatin 1
- Sablé-sur-Sarthe 6
- Le Mans

SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* pp206-7
- *Where to Eat* pp218-19



View of the Old Town in Le Mans from the river

Tours
Tour of the Loire Valleys
 pp168-9 12

Musée Robert Tatin ①

Road map B2. La Frénoise.

Laval. Cossé-le-Vivien.

Tel 02 43 98 80 89. daily (Oct–Mar: pm only). Jan, 25 Dec.

www.musee-robert-tatin.org

The multi-talented artist Robert Tatin (1902–83) devised an extraordinary museum, in the little village of La Frénoise, near Cossé-le-Vivien. The building is approached via the Allée des Géants (Giants' Avenue): lining the path are huge, strange concrete figures, depicting people who impressed Tatin, including Pablo Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, Joan of Arc and the Gallic warrior, Vercingetorix. Beyond them, a statue of a huge dragon with gaping jaws stands guard.

In the museum is a cross-section of Tatin's work: paintings, sculpture, frescoes, mosaics and ceramics. Tatin was also a cabinet-maker and much else besides. He was influenced by the megalithic monuments in Brittany and the traditional costumes worn by Breton men and women, as well as by Aztec art – he lived and travelled in South America for five years.

Laval ②

Road map C2. 56,000.

1 allée du Vieux St-Louis (02 43 49 46 46). Tue, Sat.

www.laval-tourisme.com

Laval straddles the River Mayenne, which can be crossed via the humpbacked Gothic Vieux Pont (Old Bridge). Beside it on the west bank is the **Vieux Château**. This castle dates from the early 11th century, when the region was under the sway of Foulques Nerra, Count of Anjou – it formed one link in his chain of fortresses designed to keep out the invading Bretons and

Normans. Although it has been heavily rebuilt and added to over the centuries, the original medieval round keep has survived. The flower-filled courtyard, with a terrace offering good river views, has an attractive Renaissance façade.

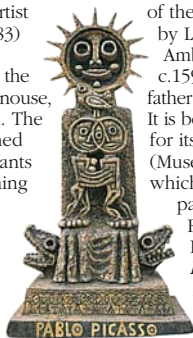
The château has a collection of the equipment used by Laval native, Ambroise Paré (1510–c.1592), known as “the father of modern surgery”. It is best known, however, for its **Musée d'Art Naïf** (Museum of Naïve Art) which was inspired in part by Henri

Rousseau (see p25). He was known as *Le Douanier*, his nickname deriving from the period when he worked as a customs officer. His Paris studio, complete

with piano, has been well reconstructed here. Although

the museum has only two works by Rousseau, there are many gems in its 450-strong collection, including a painting of the ocean liner *Normandie* by Jules Lefranc (1887–1972).

Laval's old town has attractive houses as well as the **Cathédrale de la Ste-Trinité**, with its Aubusson tapestries. Laval also has one of France's few surviving *bateaux-lavoirs*, **Bateau-Lavoir St-Julien**, now a museum. Such floating laundries first appeared in the mid-19th century on the banks of rivers in the western Loire Valley.



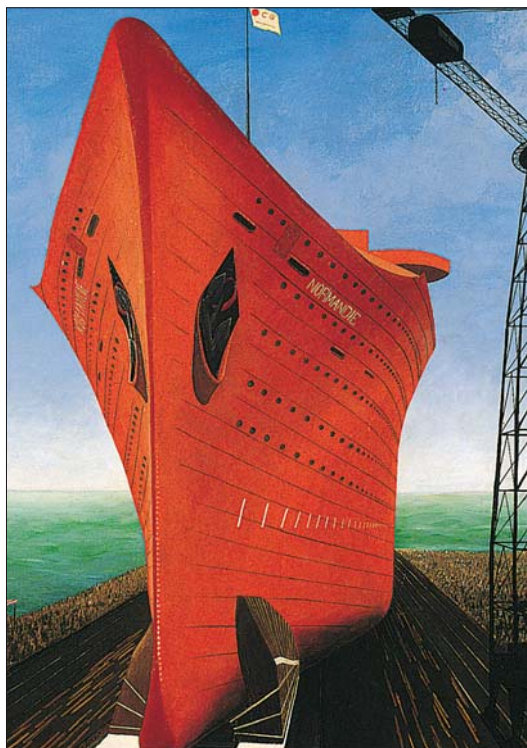
Tatin's statue of Picasso at the Musée Robert Tatin

Château & Musée du Vieux Château

Pl de la Trémoille. **Tel** 02 43 53 39 89. mid-Aug–mid-Jul: Tue–Sun; mid-Jul–mid-Aug: daily. 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 & 11 Nov, 25 Dec.

Bateau-Lavoir St-Julien

Quai Paul-Boudet. **Tel** 02 43 49 46 46 (tourist office). Jul–Aug: Tue–Sun; Sep–Jun: groups by appt.



Le Lancement du Normandie by Jules Lefranc, at the Musée d'Art Naïf

Ste-Suzanne 3

Road map C2. 1,000.
 Evron, then taxi. 1 rue
 du Chenil (02 43 01 43 60).
www.sainte-suzanne.com

This village, high on a hill, is still partly surrounded by the fortifications designed as a defence against marauding Normans in the 10th century – it was sturdy enough to withstand an attack by William the Conqueror, whose former encampment site can be seen just 3 km (2 miles) outside the town. Although much of the original castle was pulled down by the English in the early 15th century, a 10th-century keep has withstood the ravages of time. The present castle, the **Château des Fouquet de la Varenne**, constructed of white tufa and grey slate, dates from the early 17th century.

The village has a museum, the **Musée de l'Auditoire**, which covers local history, with reconstructions of events and vignettes of daily life.

Château des Fouquet de la Varenne

Promenade de la Poterne. **Tel** 02 43 01 40 77. May–Sep: daily; Oct–Apr: Tue–Sun. 1 Jan, 25 Dec.

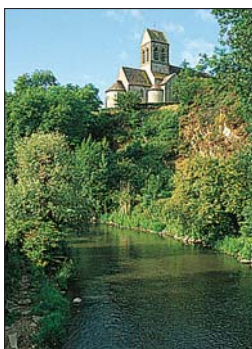
Musée de l'Auditoire

7 Grande Rue. **Tel** 02 43 01 42 65, 02 43 01 42 16. Jul & Aug: daily.

Les Alpes Mancelles 4

Road map C2. Alençon.
 Fresnay-sur-Sarthe. 19 av du
 Dr Riant, Fresnay-sur-Sarthe (02 43
 33 28 04).

The name of this region of wooded hills and green meadows, between Fresnay-sur-Sarthe and Alençon, means “Alps of Le Mans”. Although certainly an exaggeration, there is something faintly alpine in the landscape, with its



St-Céneri-le-Gérei's Romanesque church, perched on a hill

streams winding through gorges, sheep, fruit trees and heather-clad hillsides. A large part of the area is now incorporated into the regional natural park of Normandie-Maine. The prettiest villages are **St-Céneri-le-Gérei**, which has a Romanesque church containing 12th- and 14th-century frescoes, and **St-Léonard-des-Bois**, also with a

Romanesque church. There are walks through the countryside and along the River Sarthe, and the area is popular for all sorts of sports (see pp224–7).

Fresnay-sur-Sarthe 5

Road map C2. 2,400.
 Alençon, Sillé-le-Guillaume,
 La Hutte. 19 av du Dr Riant
 (02 43 33 28 04). Sat.

From the 16th to the 19th century, Fresnay-sur-Sarthe was an important centre for cloth weaving, and its outskirts remain rather industrial. The centre of Fresnay, however, still retains a somewhat medieval feel. There were originally three rings of walls surrounding the town, and fragments of them are still visible from the river.

The castle, which is strategically located on a rocky spur above the Sarthe, was besieged by William the Conqueror in 1073. During the Hundred Years' War (see pp52–3), this was the last fortress in the region to be surrendered by the English. The remains of the castle now stand as a reminder of more turbulent times, commemorated by a small museum of medieval history, the **Musée Médiéval**, in the 14th-century postern. Around the castle ruins spread acres of pleasant parkland.

Situated at the end of the avenue du Dr Riant, the **Eglise Notre-Dame**, with both Romanesque and Gothic elements, has an unusual tower with an octagonal base and a beautiful, intricately carved, old oak door.

The tourist office organises a free guided walk of the village every Friday at 5:30pm from June to September.

Musée Médiéval

Pl Bassum.
Tel 02 43 33 28 04
 (Fresnay tourist office).
 Jul–mid-Sep: daily.



Church doorway, St-Léonard-des-Bois



The River Sarthe from the town of Fresnay-sur-Sarthe

Sablé-sur-Sarthe 6

Road map C2. 🗺️ 13,000.

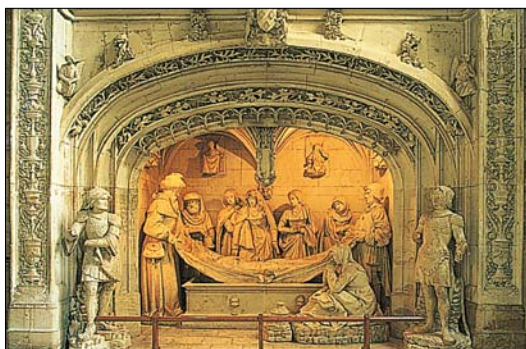
📍 pl Raphaël-Elizé (02 43 95 00 60). 🕒 Mon, Fri–Sat. 🎨

Festival de la Musique Baroque (late Aug). www.sable-sur-sarthe.com

A good base from which to take river cruises along the Sarthe, Sablé is pleasant, although fairly industrial. There is some surprising modern sculpture in this traditional setting: in the cobble place Raphaël Elizé in the town centre stands a contemporary sculpture entitled *Hymne à l'Amour*, by local sculptor Louis Derbré, and around the square are several piles of “cannon balls”, a rather curious modern installation that was inspired by an 18th-century fashion.

Sablé has some attractive shops in the pedestrian rue de l'Île and in the square, where the Maison du Sablé sells the famous shortbread-like bis-cuits to which the town has given its name.

The town's château, which was built in the early 18th century by a nephew of Louis XIV's chief minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, now houses workshops for restorers of old books and manuscripts of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the national library of France.



The Entombment of Our Lord, part of the “saints of Solesmes” group of stone carvings in the church of the Abbaye de Solesmes

Although the château cannot be visited, the pleasant park that surrounds it is open.

On the route de Solesmes, opposite the summer swimming pool, is the Jardin Public, from which there are views of the Abbaye de Solesmes.

Abbaye de Solesmes 7

Road map C2. 🗺️ Sablé-sur-Sarthe, then taxi. Tel 02 43 95 03 08.

Abbey Church 🕒 daily. 🕒 10am daily; vespers: between 4 and 5:30pm, depending on the season.

🌐 www.solesmes.com

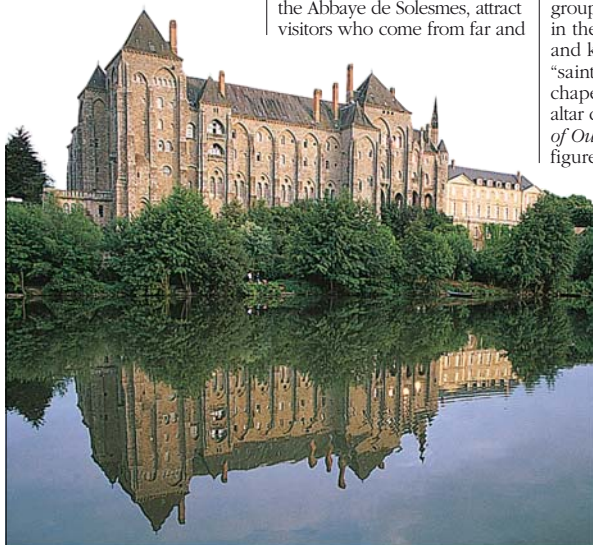
Services at the Benedictine Abbaye de St-Pierre, part of the Abbaye de Solesmes, attract visitors who come from far and

wide to listen to the monks' Gregorian chant. For over a century, the abbey has been working to preserve and promote this ancient form of prayer. Books and recordings produced by the monks are sold, outside church service times, in the shop near the entrance to the abbey.

Originally founded in 1010 as a priory, the abbey was substantially rebuilt in the late 19th century in a somewhat forbidding, fortress-like style.

The interior of the **abbey church** has an austere beauty. Its nave and transept are both Romanesque, while the 19th-century choir imitates the medieval style. Both arms of the transept are adorned by groups of stone carvings made in the 15th and 16th centuries and known collectively as the “saints of Solesmes”. The chapel to the left of the high altar contains *The Entombment of Our Lord*, with the haunting figure of Mary Magdalene kneeling at Christ's feet, deep in prayer. In *The Dormition of the Virgin*, which can be seen in the chapel on the right, the lower scenes illustrate the Virgin Mary's death and burial, while the scenes above depict her Assumption and heavenly Coronation.

The little **parish church**, which is located beside the entrance to the abbey, is worth visiting for its interesting modern stained-glass windows.



The imposing Abbaye de Solesmes, reflected in the River Sarthe

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp206–7 and pp218–19

Asnières-sur-Vègre 8

Road map C2. 380. Sablé-sur-Sarthe, then taxi. Sablé-sur-Sarthe (02 43 95 00 60).

This pretty village of old houses and water mills, with a 12th-century hump-backed bridge, is largely built in pinkish-yellow stone. Its tiny church has lively wall paintings, dating from the 12th and 15th centuries. In warm ochre and terracotta tones, they depict scenes from medieval life and moral warnings in the shape of the damned being herded into hell by huge, slaving hounds. The 13th-century **Cour d'Asnières** is an impressive Gothic building, built as a meeting place for the canons of the Cathédrale St-Julien in Le Mans.

Nearby **Juigné** is situated on the old road from Le Mans to Sablé-sur-Sarthe. Its château was rebuilt in the early 17th century. Although private, its park and terraces, with their panoramic views of the river, are open to the public. It is possible to hire boats from Juigné's tiny harbour, from which there are good views of the church perched on the cliff above.



Detail from the frescoes in Asnières' church

Cour d'Asnières

Manoir de la Cour. **Tel** 02 43 92 40 47. for restoration. (of exterior).

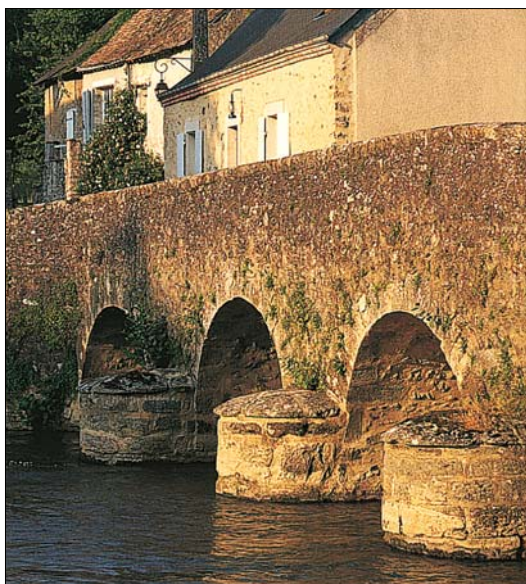
Malicorne-sur-Sarthe 9

Road map C3. 1,700.

Noyen-sur-Sarthe, La Suze-sur-Sarthe. pl Bertrand Duguesclin (02 43 94 74 45).

Fri. Fête de la Pôterie (late Sep). www.ville-malicorne.fr

The chief claim to fame of this little town on the Sarthe is its faïence (tin-glazed earthenware). Jean Loiseau, a potter, first set up here in 1747. At the **Faïenceries d'Art du Bourg-Joly** visitors can buy



The 12th-century humpbacked bridge in Asnières-sur-Vègre

the open-work ware known as *Faïence de Malicorne*. The

Faïenceries d'Art de Malicorne, (pottery) just outside the village, also has a factory shop, while the **Malicorne Espace Faïence**, in the centre of town, boasts an extensive pottery museum. Malicorne's small harbour is a

popular spot for boaters, and both cruises and the hire of small motorboats are possible. The village also boasts the pretty **Château de Malicorne**, dating from the 18th century,

as well as a charming Romanesque church.

Faïenceries d'Art du Bourg-Joly

16 rue Carnot. **Tel** 02 43 94 80 10. **Shop** Mon–Sat & Sun pm.

Faïenceries d'Art de Malicorne

18 rue Bernard Palissy. **Tel** 02 43 94 81 18. **Workshop** Apr–Sep: Tue–Sat. **Shop** Mon–Sat.



Malicorne Espace Faïence

Rue Victor Hugo. **Tel** 02 43 48 07 17. Apr–Oct: daily; Nov–Mar: Wed–Mon.

Château de Malicorne

Tel 02 43 94 84 65. Jul–Aug: Wed–Sun.



The harbour at Malicorne, surrounded by former water mills

Street-by-Street: Le Mans 10



Carving on house in rue des Chanoines

The hilly, picturesque old town (La Cité Plantagenêt) can be explored only on foot. Its narrow, cobbled streets are lined by 15th- and 16th-century half-timbered houses interspersed with Renaissance mansions. Several of the finest buildings served as temporary residences for France's kings and queens, although the one named after Richard the Lionheart's queen Bérengère, or Berengaria, was built two and a half centuries after her death. The quarter is bounded to the northwest by the old Roman walls, which run beside the River Sarthe.



Maison d'Adam et Eve

The carvings on this doctor's house illustrate the importance of astrology in 16th-century medicine.

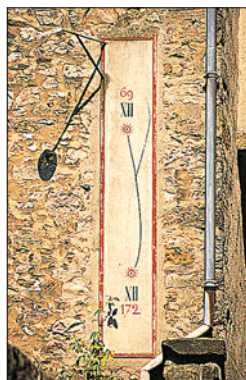


Hôtel d'Argouges

Louis XI is said to have stayed in this 15th-century turreted mansion in 1467.

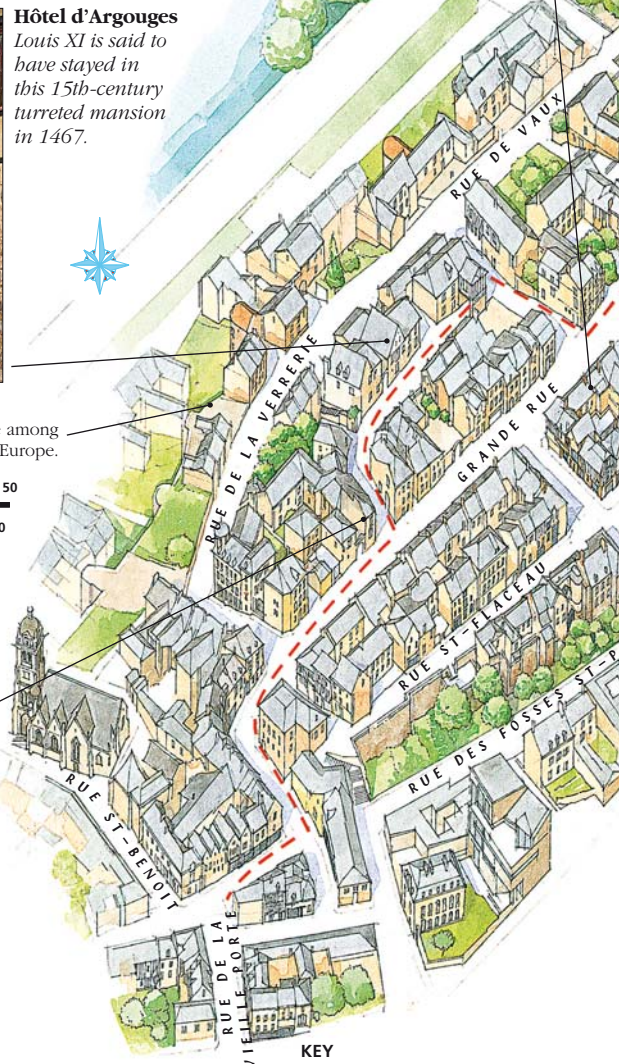
The Roman walls are among the best-preserved in Europe.

0 metres 50
0 yards 50



Hôtel Aubert de Clairaulnay

The sundial on the side of this late 16th-century mansion was placed there in 1789 by Claude Chappe, the inventor of semaphore.



KEY

— — — Suggested route

Le Grabatoire is a 16th-century mansion, built on the site of an infirmary for sick canons.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map C2. 150,000.
 bd de la Gare. ave du Général Leclerc. Hôtel des Ursulines, rue de l'Etoile (02 43 28 17 22). Wed, Fri, Sun.
 Europa Jazz Festival (Apr);
 Son et Lumière (Jul & Aug, daily).
www.lemans tourisme.com



Menhir

Tradition has it that visitors should make a wish while placing their fingers in one of the little cavities in the menhir, a prehistoric standing stone, resting against the west front of the cathedral.



★ Cathédrale St-Julien

This magnificent cathedral, renowned for its intricate flying buttresses, combines Romanesque and Gothic elements.

★ Rue des Chanoines

Among the historic buildings in this attractive street is the 12th-century St Martin's Priory at No. 11.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Rue des Chanoines
- ★ Maison des Deux Amis
- ★ Cathédrale St-Julien

The **Maison de la Reine Bérengère** houses a museum of local history.



★ Maison des Deux Amis

This building is named for its carving of two friends holding a coat of arms.



Exploring Le Mans

Although best known for its gruelling 24-hour motor race, Le Mans has many other attractions, not least of which is the magnificent Cathédrale St-Julien. The city's history stretches back to Roman times. The walls surrounding the old town, once the Roman city of Vindunum, date from the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. They originally stretched for some 1,300 m (1,400 yards). Eleven towers are still standing, all but one on the river side, and their massive walls are decorated with geometric patterns created by using courses of brick alternating with undressed stone in various colours. Outside the city walls, Le Mans has developed into a bustling, modern city with several memorable museums and a number of attractive churches.

Cathédrale St-Julien

Pl St Michel. **Tel** 02 43 28 28 98.

 daily. 


The best view of Cathédrale St-Julien's dramatic flying buttresses, unlike those of any other cathedral in their complex arrangement, is from the place des Jacobins. The cathedral is something of a hybrid: the 12th-century nave is essentially Romanesque, and the transepts were built a century later than the pure Gothic choir, one of the tallest in France, which dates from the 13th century. From the entrance via the Romanesque south portal, there is a striking view of the pillars in the choir.

These used to be decorated with 16th-century tapestries that provided a splash of colour echoed in the medieval stained glass. These days, the tapestries are displayed only a few months a year.



The Curate's Meal (1786), from the Musée de la Reine Bérengère

Musée de la Reine Bérengère

Rue de la Reine Bérengère. **Tel** 02 43 47 38 51.  Jun-Sep: Tue-Sun; Oct-May: Tue-Sun, pm only.

 public hols. 

This museum is set in three attractive half-timbered houses in the old town, their wooden façades lively with carved figures. Its collections of art and local history include




faïence and pottery from many periods, with some examples of Malicorne ware (see p163). The museum also shows furniture made in the region. On the second floor, the 19th-century paintings by local artists show how relatively

little the town of Le Mans has changed over the years. Also of note is Jean Sorieul's dramatic canvas, *The Battle of Le Mans of 13 December, 1793*.



The Plantagenet Enamel (1150) displayed in the Musée de Tessé

Musée de Tessé

2 av de Paderborn. **Tel** 02 43 47 38 51.  Tue-Sun.  

The bishop's palace, with its pretty, well-kept garden, was converted in 1927 into Le Mans' art museum, devoted to the fine and decorative arts, as well as archaeology. The permanent collection of paintings on the ground floor ranges from the late Middle Ages to the 19th century, and the archaeology section is mainly Egyptian and Greco-Roman, with two replica Pharaonic tombs. The Tessé's most famous exhibit is the vivid Plantagenet Enamel, a medieval enamelled panel depicting Geoffroy V, known as Le Bel (The Handsome). Geoffroy's son, King Henry II of England, was born in Le Mans in 1133.

Musée de l'Automobile de la Sarthe

Circuit des 24-Heures. **Tel** 02 43 72 72 24.  daily. 

Near Le Mans' famous race track is this museum, which displays a dazzling range of vintage, classic and modern racing cars and motorbikes. It includes some of the early designs of Amédée Bollée, an industrialist whose first pioneering car design dated from 1873. Bollée's family made the city famous for car design decades before the first 24-hour race (see p57).



16th-century tapestry hanging in the Cathédrale St-Julien

La Flèche 11

Road map C3. 📍 26,000. 📞 **f**
 blvd de Montréal (02 43 94 02 53).
 📅 **Wed, Sat & Sun.** 📺 **Festival**
 des Affranchis (2nd weekend Jul).
 www.tourisme-paysflechois.fr

La Flèche's chief glory is the **Prytanée Militaire**, the French military academy. Founded as a Jesuit college in 1604 by Henri IV, it was assigned its present function by Napoléon in 1808.

The entrance to the academy is through a large Baroque doorway, the Porte d'Honneur, which leads into the Cour d'Austerlitz. The Chapelle St-Louis is in the central courtyard. Its interior is richly decorated, and urns containing the ashes of the hearts of Henri IV and Marie de Médicis are displayed. The academy's gardens, with spectacular views over the river, are open to the public.

On the opposite bank of the river is Port Luneau, from where Jérôme le Royer de la Dauversière and his companions set off for the New World. Nearby, the bustling place Henri IV, with a statue of the king, is lined with cafés.

At the heart of the town, the 15th-century **Château des Carmes**, the former town hall (now hosting art exhibitions), is reflected in the River Loir.

📞 Prytanée Militaire

Rue du Collège. 📞 02 43 48 59 06. 📅 **Jul & Aug:** daily; **Sep–Jun:** groups by appt. 📺



Place Henri IV in La Flèche, with the statue of the king in the centre

Le Lude 12

Road map C3. 📍 4,900. 📞 **f**
 pl F-de-Nicolay (02 43 94 62 20).
 📅 **Thu.** 📺 **Marché Nocturne**
 (night market; 3rd weekend in Jul).
 www.ville-lelude.com

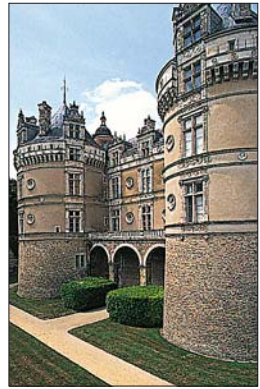
The oldest section of this market town is the area surrounding the **Château du Lude**, where houses dating from the 15th to 17th centuries line the narrow streets. Although the site has been fortified for more than 1,000 years, the present château dates from the 15th century. Over the next 300 years the building's originally square layout and four corner towers were transformed as its function changed to that of a country house.

The interior is beautifully furnished, largely in the 19th-century style, although there are some pieces from the 17th and 18th centuries, including French and Flemish tapestries. The Oratory is decorated with 16th-century frescoes, which

depict Old Testament scenes. The formal gardens lead down to the River Loir.

📞 Château du Lude

📞 02 43 94 60 09. 📅 **Apr–Sep:** Thu–Tue, pm only (mid-Jun–Aug: daily pm). **Park** Apr–Sep: daily. **Oct–Mar:** groups by appt. 📺 📺 📺 ground floor. 📺 **Le Weekend des Jardinières** (1st weekend Jun). www.lelude.com



The imposing towers of the Château du Lude



LES 24 HEURES DU MANS

The name of Le Mans is known throughout the world, thanks to its famous 24-hour car race. Since it began on 26 May 1923, the event has attracted huge crowds every June, both from France and abroad – these days, more than 230,000 spectators and 2,500 journalists watch the race. The circuit is to the south of the city and is 13.6-km (8½-miles) long, including some stretches on ordinary roads. Nowadays, drivers can cover some 5,300 km (3,300 miles) within the time limit. Within the course is the Hunaudières track where, in 1908, Wilbur Wright staged the first aeroplane flight in France.

One of the early races in Le Mans

Tour of the Loir Valley 1B

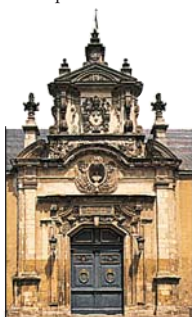
Between Poncé-sur-le-Loir and La Flèche, the River Loir passes through peaceful, unspoiled countryside and picturesque villages. An unhurried tour of the valley takes two days and allows time to try some of the numerous riverside and forest walks. Families may enjoy the sailing, riding, angling and cycling facilities available in the area, while art lovers can seek out little-known churches adorned with delicately coloured Romanesque frescoes. Wine buffs will be interested in trying some of the area's wines, which can be sipped from locally blown glass – the Loir Valley also has an excellent reputation for its crafts.



The banks of the tranquil Loir, ideal for fishing and walking

La Flèche ①

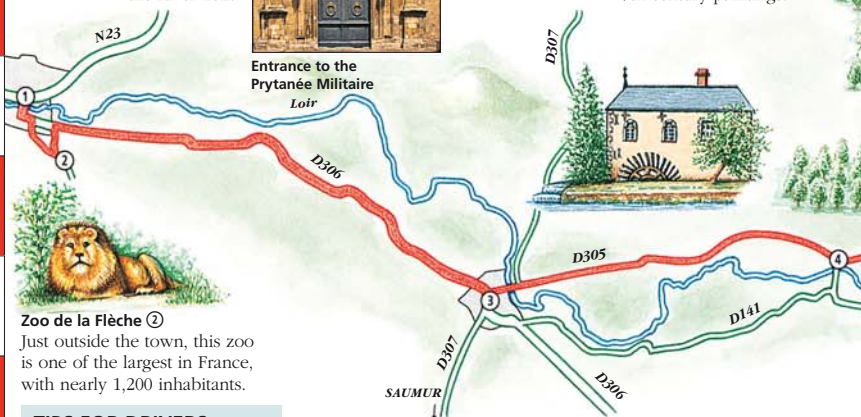
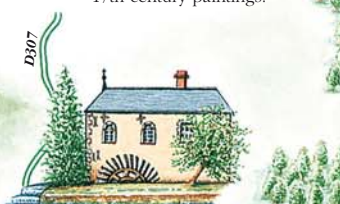
The home of the Prytanée Militaire (military academy, see p167), La Flèche is a charming town with wonderful views across the River Loir.



Entrance to the Prytanée Militaire
Loir

Vaas ④

The Moulin de Rotrou, on the edge of this pretty village, is a working flour mill and museum of breadmaking. In Vaas, the Eglise St-Georges has fine 17th-century paintings.



Zoo de la Flèche ②

Just outside the town, this zoo is one of the largest in France, with nearly 1,200 inhabitants.

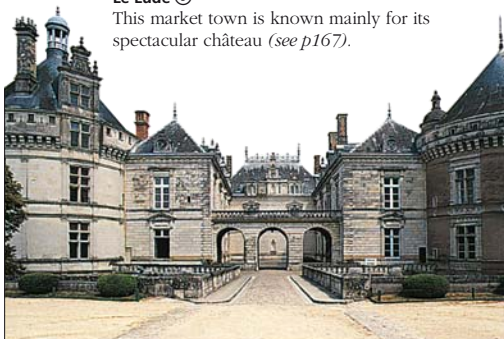
TIPS FOR DRIVERS

Tour length: 103 km (64 miles).

Stopping-off points: The forests and riverbanks along the Loir are ideal for picnicking, and shops in the region sell delicacies to make a cold meal very special. This will be a doubly satisfying experience if you buy local produce from a market, such as that in Le Lude, first. If you prefer to eat in a restaurant, La Fesse d'Ange in La Flèche has local dishes on the menu. For those wishing to stay overnight, Le Relais Cicéro, also in La Flèche, is recommended.

Le Lude ③

This market town is known mainly for its spectacular château (see p167).



The entrance to the Château du Lude



Magnificent oak trees in the Futaie des Clos

Forêt de Bercé ⑤

This extensive forest is famous for its ancient oaks. Some in the Futaie des Clos are more than 40 m (130 ft) tall and 350 years old. In Jupilles visitors can see traditional wooden clogs (*sabots*) being made. The Fontaine de la Coudre, 4 km (2½ miles) west of the village, is a natural spring.



The chateau and formal gardens at Poncé-sur-le-Loir

Lhomme ⑥

Famed for its flinty, dry, white Jasnières wines, Lhomme has a small museum of winemaking next to the town hall.

Poncé-sur-le-Loir ⑦

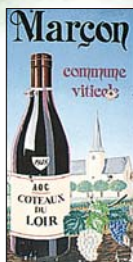
The Renaissance chateau has a remarkable carved stairwell, similar to that at Azay-le-Rideau (see pp96-97).

La Possonnière ⑧

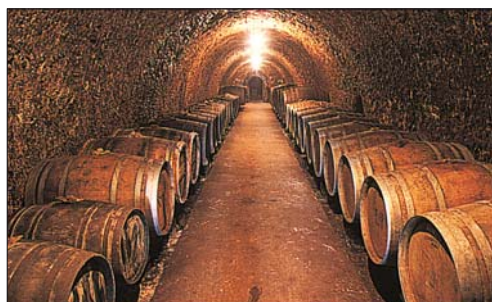
The poet Pierre de Ronsard was born in the Renaissance manor house here.

Marçonn ⑨

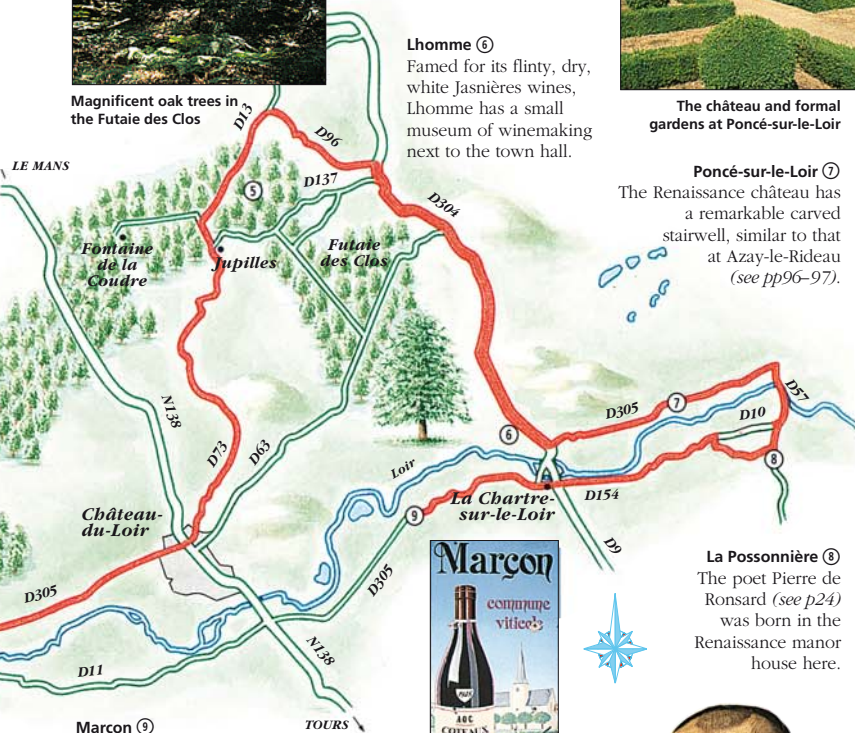
Local Coteaux-du-Loir and Jasnières wines can be tasted in this small town, which also has an artificial lake, popular for windsurfing and other water sports.



A vineyard sign in Marçonn



Rows of barrels in a Marçonn wine cellar



Portrait of Pierre de Ronsard

KEY

- Suggested route
- Other routes

0 kilometres 5

0 miles

5



The Château de Courtanvaux with its towering walls

Château de Courtanvaux 14

Bessé-sur-Braye. **Road map** D3. **Tel** 02 43 35 34 43. **Easter–mid-Oct:** Tue & Wed. **Park** **daily.**

Although difficult to find and unpromisingly approached through an ugly industrial estate, this large Gothic and Renaissance private château, restored in 1815, is a romantic sight as it looms up at the end of a tree-lined drive. Turrets surmount the towering walls and the impressive gateway, and willows weep gracefully over the moat.

From the 15th century until 1978, when its Renaissance gateway was officially classed as an historical monument, the château was never sold – its ownership was transferred either through inheritance or through marriage. Although unfurnished, its formal gardens are home to a tiny Gothic chapel, and visitors are free to explore the woods and pools of its 63 ha (156 acres) of pleasant parkland.

Châteaudun 15

Road map E2. 14,500. **1 rue de Luynes** (02 37 45 22 46). **Thu.** **Foire aux Laines** (medieval fair, early Jul). www.ville-chateaudun.com

Dominated by its fierce-looking **château**, the town of Châteaudun is situated above the River Loir

where the Beauce plain meets the Perche district. Châteaudun was owned at one time by the aristocratic poet Charles d'Orléans (see p24), who then handed it on to his half-brother Jean Dunois, known as the bastard of Orléans and one of Joan of Arc's loyal companions-in-arms (see p137). It was Jean who began the château's south wing in 1460, and built the beautiful late Gothic chapel, adorned with murals and life-size statues. The other wing was built half a century later.

Both wings are hung with wonderful tapestries, which date from the 16th and 17th centuries. Visitors can tour the château's living rooms, kitchens and the massive keep.

Châteaudun's Old Town has a number of picturesque buildings, as well as several interesting churches: the Romanesque **Eglise de la Madeleine**, built in stages and now restored after damage sustained in 1940, and **St-Valérien**, with its tall square belfry. Situated on the far bank of the River Loir, the **Eglise St-Jean-de-la-Chaine** is also Romanesque.

Château
Tel 02 37 94 02 90. **daily.**
 1 Jan, 1 May, 25 Dec.
 restricted. www.monum.fr



A view of Châteaudun's castle from across the River Loir

Illiers-Combray 16

Road map E2. 3,500. **5 rue Henri Germond** (02 37 24 24 00). **Fri.** **Journée des Aubépines** (Proustian May Day, May).

The little market town of Illiers has added the word “Combray” to its name in honour of Marcel Proust's magnificent novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*, in which it is depicted as Combray (see p25). As a child, Proust spent many happy summer holidays in the town, walking by the banks of the River Loir, which he later portrayed in his work, as the “Vivonne”. With its quiet church square, it seems surpris-



Remembrance of Things Past by Proust

ingly unspoilt to the author's admirers, who make pilgrimages to the places described in the novel. They can also visit the house once owned by Proust's uncle Jules Amiot, **La Maison de Tante Léonie**. The house is now a small and touching museum, with displays about the famous writer's life, complete with

the kitchen where the “Françoise” of the novel (who was actually Ernestine, the family cook) reigned supreme.

La Maison de Tante Léonie

4 rue du Dr Proust. **Tel** 02 37 24 30 97. **Tue–Sun.** **mid-Dec–mid-Jan.**



Carved hounds and stag on the gateway of the Château d'Anet

Château d'Anet 17

Road map E1. Dreux, then taxi. **Tel** 02 37 41 90 07. Feb–Mar & Nov: Sat–Sun pm; Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon pm. Dec–Jan.

When the mistress of Henri II, Diane de Poitiers, was banished from Chenonceau after the king's accidental death in 1559, she retired to Anet, which she had inherited from her husband, and remained here until her death in 1566. It had been rebuilt for her by Philibert de l'Orme, who also designed the bridge over the Cher at Chenonceau (see pp106–7). The château was superbly decorated and furnished, as befitted the woman who reigned over a king's heart for nearly 30 years.

The château was sold after the Revolution and, in 1804, the new owner pulled down the central apartments and the right wing. However, you can still admire the magnificent entrance gate (the bronze relief of Diane by Benvenuto

Cellini is a copy), the chapel, decorated with bas-reliefs by the Renaissance sculptor Jean Goujon (c.1510–68), and the richly furnished west wing. Just beside the château stands the mausoleum where Diane de Poitiers is buried.

Chartres 18

Road map E2. 42,000. **pl** de la Cathédrale (02 37 18 26 26). Sat. Festival d'Orgue (organ music; Jul–Aug). www.ville-chartres.fr

Surrounded by the wheat fields of the Beauce plain, Chartres was for many years a major market town. Visitors who come to see the Gothic cathedral (see pp172–3) should explore the town's old streets, particularly the rue Chantault, the rue des Ecuycers, the rue aux Herbes and, over the Eure, the rue de la Tannerie (which took its name from the tanneries that once lined the river).

The **Musée des Beaux-Arts**, occupying the elegant 18th-century building that was once the bishop's palace, is to the north of the cathedral. It has some fine Renaissance enamel plaques, a portrait of Erasmus in old age by Holbein, and many 17th- and 18th-century paintings, by French and Flemish artists. There is also a collection of 17th- and 18th-century harpsichords and spinets.

Beautiful stained glass is not restricted to the cathedral: the Gothic **Eglise St-Pierre** beside the river has



Half-timbered houses in the rue Chantault in Chartres

lovely windows dating from the 14th century, those in **St-Aignan** date from the 17th century.

The **Centre International du Vitrail**, a stained glass centre, is housed in the converted attics of the Cellier de Loëns, which was part of the cathedral's chapter house. Visitors can enjoy temporary exhibitions of old and new stained glass, as well as changing exhibitions on the theme of stained glass.

Musée des Beaux-Arts
29 cloître Notre-Dame. **Tel** 02 37 90 45 80. Wed–Mon. Sun
ams & public hols.

Centre International du Vitrail
5 rue du Cardinal Pie. **Tel** 02 37 21 65 72. daily. 1 Jan, 25 Dec
(and between exhibitions).

Conservatoire de l'Agriculture
Le Compa, pont de Mainvilliers.
Tel 02 37 84 15 00. Tue–Sun.
1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov & 25 Dec.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PROUST

No visit to Illiers-Combray is complete without retracing the hallowed walks of Marcel Proust's childhood holidays. When he stayed with his Aunt and Uncle Amiot, he would join in the family walks that became, in *Remembrance of Things Past*, "Swann's Way" and "Guermantès Way".

The first takes the walkers towards the village of Méréglise, crossing the Loire and passing through a park that was once Uncle Jules' Pré Catelan and appears in the novel as "Tansonville Park". The "Guermantès" walk covers a few kilometres towards St-Eman, following the river to its source, now trapped unromantically in a wash house in the village. The walks are signposted and guides are available at the local tourist office.

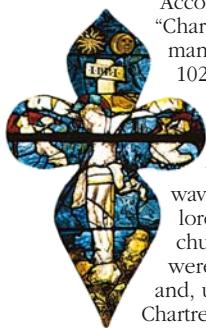


Illiers-Combray's "Tansonville Park"

Chartres: Cathédrale Notre-Dame

According to art historian Emile Male, “Chartres is the mind of the Middle Ages manifest”. The Romanesque cathedral, begun in 1020, was destroyed by fire in 1194; only the south tower, west front and crypt remained.

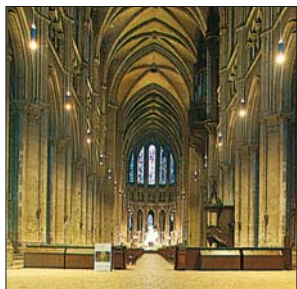
Inside, the sacred Veil of the Virgin relic was the sole treasure to survive. In a wave of enthusiasm, peasant and lord alike helped to rebuild the church in just 25 years. There were few alterations after 1250 and, unlike other cathedrals, Chartres was unscathed by the Wars of Religion and the French Revolution. The result is a Gothic cathedral with a true “Bible in stone” reputation.



Part of the Vendôme Window

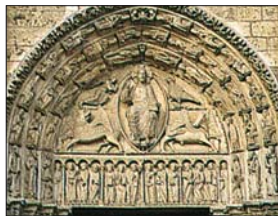
STAR FEATURES

- ★ Royal Portal
- ★ South Porch
- ★ Stained-Glass Windows



Gothic Nave

As wide as the Romanesque crypt below it, the nave reaches a record height of 37 m (121 ft).



★ Royal Portal

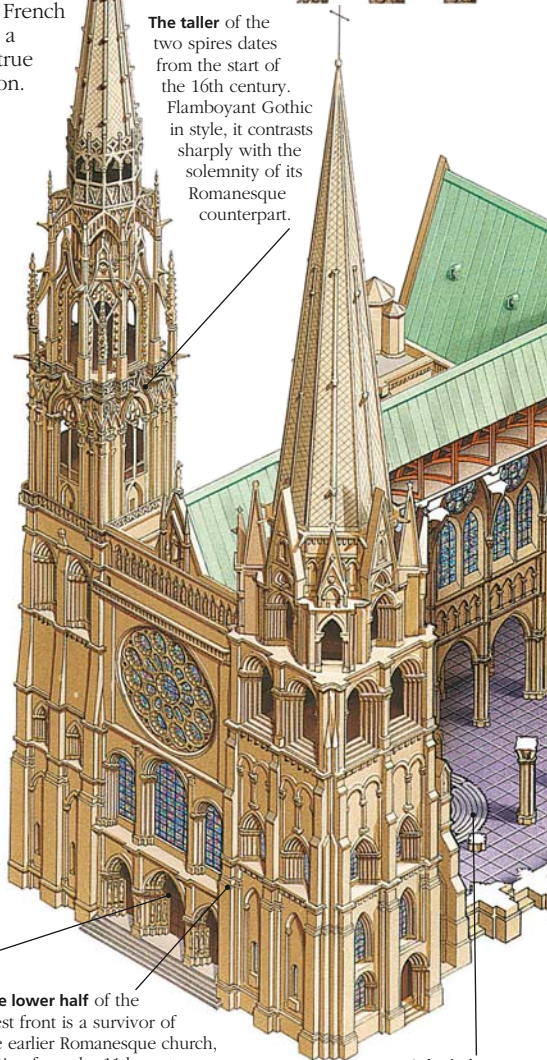
The central tympanum of the Royal Portal (1145–55) shows Christ in Majesty.

Elongated Statues

These statues on the Royal Portal represent Old Testament figures.



The taller of the two spires dates from the start of the 16th century. Flamboyant Gothic in style, it contrasts sharply with the solemnity of its Romanesque counterpart.



The lower half of the west front is a survivor of the earlier Romanesque church, dating from the 11th century.

Labyrinth

THE LABYRINTH

The 13th-century labyrinth, inlaid in the floor of the nave, was a feature of most medieval cathedrals. As a penance, pilgrims used to follow the tortuous route on their knees, echoing the Way of the Cross. The journey of 262 m (860 ft), around 11 bands of broken concentric circles, took at least an hour to complete.



VISITORS' CHECKLIST

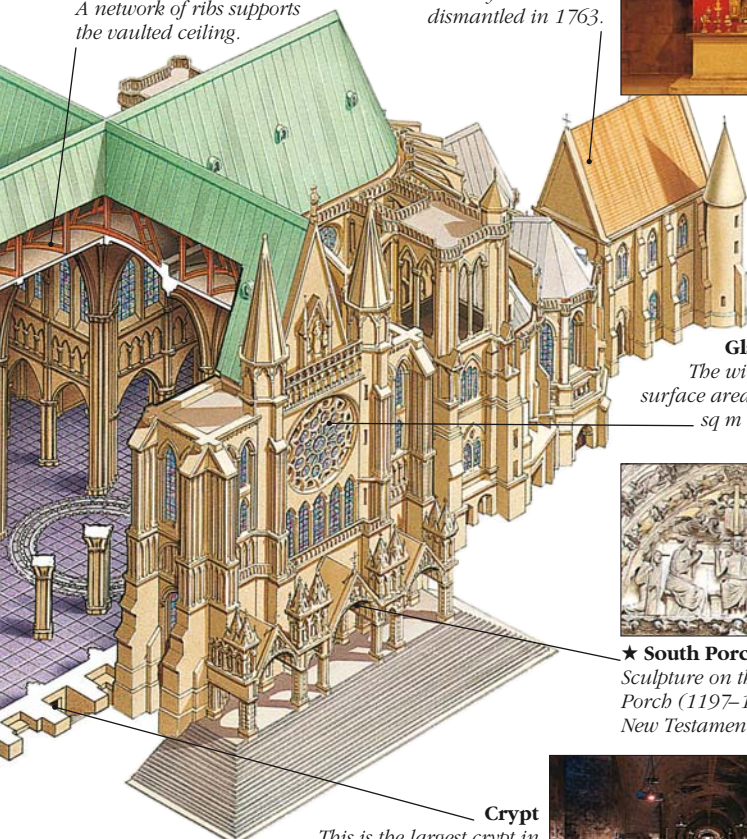
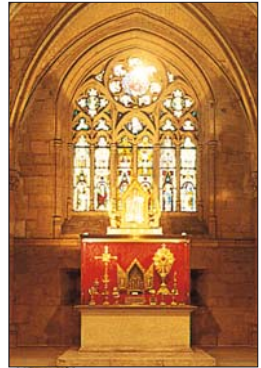
Pl de la Cathédrale. **Tel** 02 37 21 75 02. ☐ 8:30am–6:45pm daily. **†** 11:45am Mon–Sat; 6:15pm Mon–Fri; 7pm Sun–Fri; also 9am Fri; 6pm Sat; 11am & 6pm Sun. **📷** **♿** **🗺** Easter–Oct: 10:30am Tue–Sat & 3pm daily; Nov–Easter: 2:30pm daily. English: noon, 2:45pm. **🗨** (tours).



Vaulted Ceiling

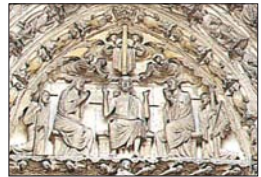
A network of ribs supports the vaulted ceiling.

St-Piat Chapel
Built between 1324 and 1353, the chapel houses the cathedral treasures, including the Veil of the Virgin relic and fragments of the fragile 13th-century rood screen dismantled in 1763.



★ Stained-Glass Windows

The windows cover a surface area of over 3,000 sq m (32,300 sq ft).



★ South Porch

Sculpture on the South Porch (1197–1209) reflects New Testament teaching.

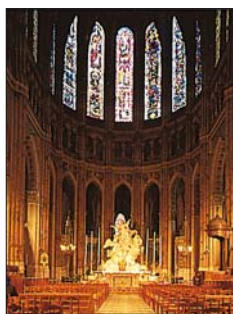
Crypt

This is the largest crypt in France, most of it dating from the early 11th century. It comprises two parallel galleries, a series of chapels and the 9th-century St Lubin's vault.

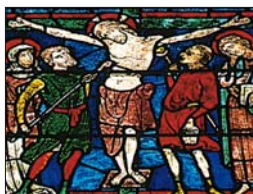


The Stained Glass of Chartres

Donated by the guilds between 1210 and 1240, this glorious collection of stained glass is world-renowned. Over 150 windows illustrate biblical stories and daily life in the 13th century (bring binoculars if you can). During both World Wars the windows were dismantled piece by piece and removed for safety. Some windows were restored and releded in the 1970s, but much more remains to be done.



Stained glass above the apse



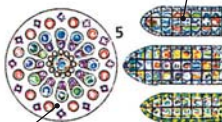
Redemption Window

Six scenes illustrate Christ's Passion and death on the Cross (c.1210).



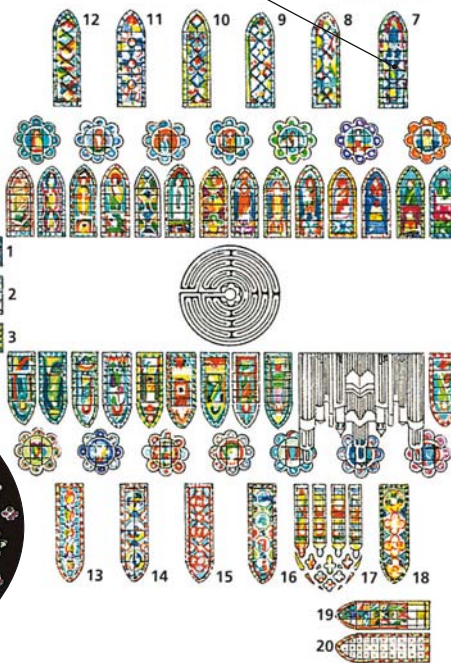
★ Tree of Jesse

This 12th-century stained glass shows Christ's genealogy. The tree rises up from Jesse, father of David, at the bottom, to Christ enthroned at the top.



★ West Rose Window

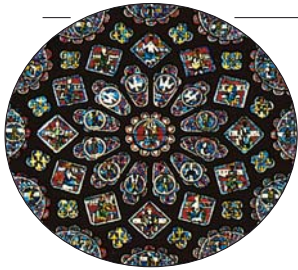
This window (1215), with Christ seated in the centre, shows the Last Judgment.



KEY

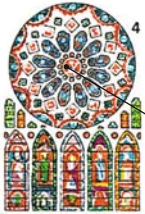
- | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Tree of Jesse | 12 Noah | 22 St Anthony and St Paul | 33 St Theodore and St Vincent |
| 2 Incarnation | 13 St John the Evangelist | 23 Blue Virgin | 34 St Stephen |
| 3 Passion and Resurrection | 14 Mary Magdalene | 24 Life of the Virgin | 35 St Cheron |
| 4 North Rose Window | 15 Good Samaritan and Adam and Eve | 25 Zodiac Window | 36 St Thomas |
| 5 West Rose Window | 16 Assumption | 26 St Martin | 37 Peace Window |
| 6 South Rose Window | 17 Vendôme Chapel Windows | 27 St Thomas à Becket | 38 Modern Window |
| 7 Redemption Window | 18 Miracles of Mary | 28 St Margaret and St Catherine | 39 Prodigal Son |
| 8 St Nicholas | 19 St Apollinaris | 29 St Nicholas | 40 Ezekiel and David |
| 9 Joseph | 20 Modern Window | 30 St Remy | 41 Aaron |
| 10 St Eustache | 21 St Fulbert | 31 St James the Greater | 42 Virgin and Child |
| 11 St Lubin | | 32 Charlemagne | 43 Isaiah and Moses |
| | | | 44 Daniel and Jeremiah |

For hotels and restaurants in this region see pp206–7 and pp218–19



North Rose Window

This depicts the Glorification of the Virgin, surrounded by the kings of Judah and the prophets (c.1230).



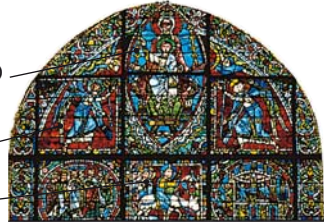
GUIDE TO READING THE WINDOWS

Each window is divided into panels, which are usually read from left to right, bottom to top (earth to heaven). The number of figures or abstract shapes used is symbolic: three stands for the Church; squares and the number four symbolize the material world or the four elements; circles eternal life.

Mary and Child in the sacred mandorla (c.1150)

Two angels doing homage before the celestial throne

Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem



Upper panels of the Incarnation Window



South Rose Window

This illustrates the Apocalypse, with Christ in Majesty (c.1225).



★ Blue Virgin Window
Scenes of The Marriage at Cana show Christ changing water into wine at the request of the Virgin Mary.

STAR WINDOWS

- ★ West Rose Window
- ★ Tree of Jesse
- ★ Blue Virgin Window





LOIRE-ATLANTIQUE AND THE VENDÉE

The region stretching from Guérande in the north to the Marais Poitevin in the south turns away from the Vallée des Rois, the land of châteaux, to face the sea. Pale limestone gives way to darker granite and, beyond the billy, wooded areas to the east, plains stretch into marshlands and estuaries inhabited by clouds of birds.

Here, people have for centuries won their living either from the land or from the sea. Local communities were until quite recently isolated, conservative, religious and fiercely independent. Their loyalties were the basis of the Vendée Uprising (see p187) which, at the end of the 18th century, threatened the new French Republic and ended in the devastation of an entire region south of the Loire. Until the 1790s, Nantes, the capital of the Loire-Atlantique, and its environs were part of Brittany, one of the last French duchies to be brought under the crown.

Nantes itself grew prosperous on the wealth generated by its maritime trade to become the seventh largest city of France in the 18th and 19th centuries. With its fine museums and elegant 18th-century *quartiers*, it remains a fascinating and likeable city.



The coast and islands of the Loire-Atlantique to the north, and the Vendée – as the region to the south is known – now draw thousands of summer visitors.

Part of their charm is that most of the holiday-makers are French, since the rest of the world has barely begun to discover the beauty of the rocky headlands of Le Croisic or the beaches of golden sand that stretch from La Baule to Les Sables d'Olonne. In the south, dry summers and warm winters on the Ile de Noirmoutier have given it an almost Mediterranean look, with its whitewashed houses and Roman tiles.

In contrast, the Marais Poitevin, at the southern tip of the Vendée, is one of France's most fascinating natural environments. This land has been won back from rivers and the sea through the construction of dykes, canals and dams over hundreds of years.



An oyster gatherer in the Bay of Aiguillon

Exploring Loire-Atlantique and the Vendée

The mighty river Loire finally reaches the sea at St-Nazaire, in the west of the Loire-Atlantique *département*. To the northwest lies the Guérandaise Peninsula, where long expanses of sandy, south-facing beaches give way to the dramatic, rocky Atlantic coastlines. The best Atlantic beaches stretch along the Vendée coastline, from the Ile de Noirmoutier to the Marais Poitevin in the south. The Marais Poitevin, 96,000 hectares (237,000 acres) of marshland, is networked with canals. To the east lie the Vendée Hills, where the roads wind gently through towns and along the hillsides, giving lovely views of the surrounding area.



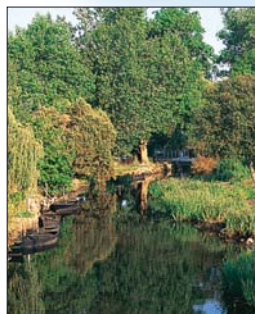
A rocky inlet at L'Aubraie on the Atlantic coast

SEE ALSO

- *Where to Stay* p207
- *Where to Eat* p219

GETTING AROUND

Nantes, with its international airport and major train station, is the transportation hub for the region. The TGV takes only two hours to reach Nantes from Paris, and some trains continue to Le Croisic, only one hour further on. The fastest route by car to Nantes is *L'Océane* autoroute (A11) via Le Mans and Angers. While the N137 is the most direct route south to the Marais Poitevin, the coastal route, stopping off at the beautiful beaches along the way, is far more scenic. Inland towards the Vendée Hills, the D960, D752 and D755 around Pouzages are scenic drives.



A canal in La Grande Brière





SIGHTS AT A GLANCE

- Clisson 12
- Fontenay-le-Comte 8
- Goulaine 13
- Guérandaise Peninsula 1
- Ile de Noirmoutier 2
- Ile d'Yeu 3
- Luçon 7
- Marais Poitevin (pp182-5) 5
- Nantes (pp190-93) 14
- Pouzauges 10
- Puy-du-Fou 11
- La Roche-sur-Yon 6
- Les Sables d'Olonne 4
- Vouvant 9



Harvesting salt the traditional way near Guérande

KEY

- Motorway
- Major road
- Secondary road
- Minor road
- Road under construction
- Scenic route
- Main railway
- Minor railway
- Regional border

Guérandaise Peninsula ①

Road map A3. 📍 Le Croisic, La Baule. 📍 Le Croisic, La Baule, Guérande. 📞 Le Croisic (02 40 23 00 70), La Baule (02 40 24 34 44), Guérande (02 40 24 96 71).

La Baule, one of the grandest seaside resorts of the late 19th century, has a superb 8-km (5-mile) sweep of golden sand, now dominated by apartment blocks. However, in the pines behind the modern buildings, there is a fascinating assortment of eccentric turn-of-the-century villas. The resort of Pornichet, which adjoins La Baule, also retains some older villas beyond a modern marina crammed with yachts.

Le Croisic, reaching into the Atlantic on the west, has a wilder charm. Beyond the lively main port are miles of salty headlands with small beaches, pounding surf and wind-sculpted pines. The **Océarium** near the port is one of France's largest, privately owned aquaria.

The medieval walled town of Guérande grew rich on its *fleur de sel* – gourmet Breton salt “farmed” on extensive marshlands between here and Le Croisic. Exhibitions and a video in the **Musée des Marais Salants** at Batz-sur-Mer give an excellent idea of the painstaking techniques used to maintain its quality.

Guérande is protected by its ramparts, which are entered through four 15th-century gateways. The main gatehouse, St-Michel, houses a regional museum. In the centre of the town is the **Collégiale St-Aubin**, a church first built in the 1100s and later renovated. It has stained glass from the 14th and 16th centuries and Romanesque capitals depicting scenes from the lives of martyrs, mythology and arts.

Just 10 km (6 miles) to the east of Guérande is the **Parc Naturel Régional de**



A traditional thatched house in the Brière regional park

Brière, a park of 40,000 hectares (100,000 acres) of marshlands. Information about guided tours by flat-bottomed boat or on foot, bicycle or horseback is available from the tourist office in what was once a clog-maker's house in La Chapelle-des-Marais. Kerhinet, a village of 18 restored cottages, has displays on regional life.

🦋 Océarium

Av de St-Goustan, Le Croisic. 📞 02 40 23 02 44. 🕒 daily. 🗓 first 3 weeks Jan. 📍 📞 🌐 www.ocearium-croisic.fr

🏛 Musée des Marais Salants

Batz-sur-Mer. 📞 02 40 23 82 79. 🕒 Sat & Sun (Jun–Sep, school hols: daily). 🗓 1–21 Dec, pub hols. 📍 📞 🌐

🦋 Parc Naturel Régional de Brière

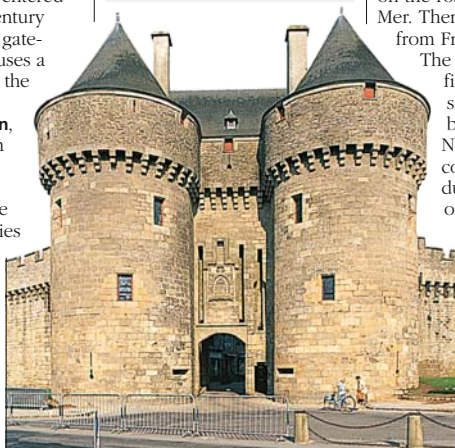
Road map A3. 📍 La Baule, Le Croisic, Pontchâteau, St Nazaire. 📞 📍 La Chapelle-des-Marais (02 40 66 85 01).

Ile de Noirmoutier ②

Road map A4. 📍 Noirmoutier-en-l'Île. 📞 Noirmoutier-en-l'Île (02 51 39 80 71). 🌐 www.ile-noirmoutier.com

Whitewashed Midi-style beach villas on a long, low island of fertile polders (land reclaimed from the sea) give Noirmoutier a unique character. The adventurous visitor arrives along a bumpy causeway nearly 5 km (3 miles) long, which is above the sea for only three hours at low tide. Cockle-collecting locals park their cars in the mud, but those who flirt with the tides sometimes have to climb to safety on platforms (*balises*) along the causeway. Crossing periods are posted on the road at Beauvoir-sur-Mer. There is also a bridge from Fromentine.

The island's mild climate, fishing industry and salt marshes were the basis of its wealth. Now summer tourists come to visit its long dunes, pretty beaches on the northeast and the neat main village of Noirmoutier-en-l'Île. The dry-moated **Château de Noirmoutier** dates from the 12th century. It has displays on aspects of local history, including the bullet-riddled



Porte St-Michel gatehouse, one of the entrances to Guérande

chair in which the Duc d'Elbée was executed during the Vendée Uprising (see p187). There is also an **aquarium** and the **Musée de la Construction Navale**, illustrating boat-making techniques and maritime traditions. **Parc Océanile**, a water park that opened in 1994, includes water chutes and slides, pools with artificial waves, torrents and hot geysers.

♣ Château de Noirmoutier

Pl d'Armes. **Tel** 02 51 39 10 42.

☉ **Wed–Mon** (mid-Jun–mid-Sep: daily). ♿

🐠 Aquarium-Sealand

Rue de l'Écluse. **Tel** 02 51 39 08

11. ☉ **mid-Feb–mid-Nov**: daily.



🏰 Musée de la Construction Navale

Rue de l'Écluse. **Tel** 02 51 39 24 00.

☉ **Easter–mid-Jun & mid-Sep–Oct**:

Tue–Sun; **mid-Jun–mid-Sep**: daily.

☉ **Nov–Easter**: ♿

🐠 Parc Océanile

Site des Oudinières, route de Noir moutier. **Tel** 02 51 35 91 35.

☉ **late Jun–early Sep**: daily.



Polyprion americanus, one of the fish in Noirmoutier's aquarium

Ile d'Yeu ③

Road map A4. 🗺️ 5,000.

🚗 **from Fromentine to Port-**

Joinville. 📍 **Port-Joinville**

(02 51 58 32 58). **www.ile-yeu.fr**

The sandy coves and rocky coastline of this island, only 10 by 4 km (6 by 2½ miles), attract summer visitors. Near the old fishing harbour of Port-de-la-Meule are a ruined 11th-century **castle** and the **Pierre Tremblante**, a giant Neolithic stone said to move when pressed at a critical spot.



The fishing village of La Chaume, near Les Sables d'Olonne

Les Sables d'Olonne ④

Road map A4. 🗺️ 16,000. 🚗

📍 1 **promenade Marechal Joffre** (02

51 96 85 85). 🕒 **Tue–Sun**. **www.**

lessablesdolonne-tourisme.com

The justifiable popularity of the fine, curving sands has helped to preserve the most elegant beach promenade in western France. Behind the 18th-century esplanade, hilly streets lead to a lively port on the sea channel. Opposite, the fishing village of La Chaume has a chic marina.

In Les Sables itself, attractions include the morning market at Les Halles (Tue–Sun; daily mid-Jun–mid-Sep), near

the church of **Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Port**. Running between Les Halles and the rue de la Patrie lies France's narrowest street, rue de l'Enfer, which is only 53 cm (21 in) wide at the entrance on rue de la Patrie.

Masterly views of Les Sables in the 1920s by Albert Marquet are in the **Musée de l'Abbaye Ste-Croix**. Built as a convent in the 1600s, this now houses mainly modern paintings, Surrealist multimedia works and maritime exhibits.

🏰 Musée de l'Abbaye Ste-Croix

Rue de Verdun. **Tel** 02 51 32 01

16. ☉ **mid-Jun–Sep**: Tue–Sun;

Oct–mid-Jun: Tue–Sun pm only.

☉ **public hols**. ♿ **not Sunday**.

THE BEST ATLANTIC COAST BEACHES

Les Sables d'Olonne hosted both the European surfing championship in 1987 and the world windsurfing championship in 1988. It also offers family bathing at the Grande Plage. Surfers enjoy the bigger waves at Le Tanchet (Le Château d'Olonne) and L'Aubraie (La Chaume). Other good surfing beaches are Sauveterre and Les Granges (Olonne-sur-Mer) and, further north, La Sauzaie at Brétignolles-sur-Mer. Apart from Les Sables, major esplanades and beaches with fine sands and good facilities include the Grande Plage at La Baule and Les Demoiselles at St-Jean-de-Monts.



The wide, sandy beach of L'Aubraie at La Chaume

Marais Poitevin 5



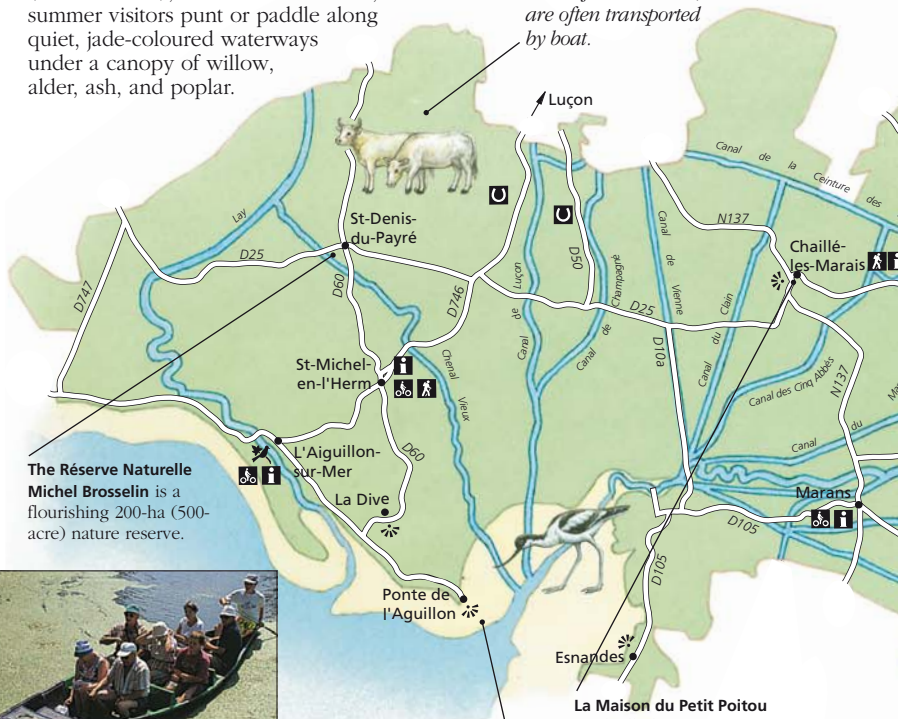
Kingfisher

The vast regional park of the Marais Poitevin stretches 96,000 ha (237,000 acres) across the south of the Vendée. In Roman times, most of it was under water. One thousand years of dyke building and drainage, first started by medieval monks, have produced the agricultural plains of the western Marais Desséché (dry marsh), which are protected from river floods inland by a complex network of canals. The enchanting aquatic mosaic of the Marais Mouillé (wet marsh), also known as the Venise Verte (Green Venice), lies to the east. Here, summer visitors punt or paddle along quiet, jade-coloured waterways under a canopy of willow, alder, ash, and poplar.



White Charolais Cattle

Prized for their meat, these cows are often transported by boat.



The Réserve Naturelle Michel Brosselin is a flourishing 200-ha (500-acre) nature reserve.



Flat-bottomed Barque

This typical Marais Mouillé boat has a broad bow and a chisel-shaped stern. Skilled oarsmen row or pole the boat along the canals.

STAR SIGHTS

- ★ Eglise St-Nicolas, Maillezais
- ★ Coulon
- ★ Arçais



Mussel Farms

Mussels are farmed on the coast around L'Aiguillon-sur-Mer. The larvae are placed on ropes strung between posts embedded in the silt, exposed to the tide's ebb and flow.

La Maison du Petit Poitou at Chaillé-les-Marais, gives information on the hydraulic system of the entire area.

KEY

Mud flats

Marais Desséché

Marais Mouillé

Viewpoint

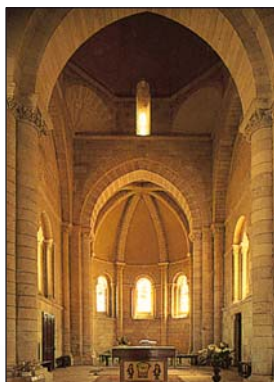
Hiking route

Horse riding

Tourist information

Boating

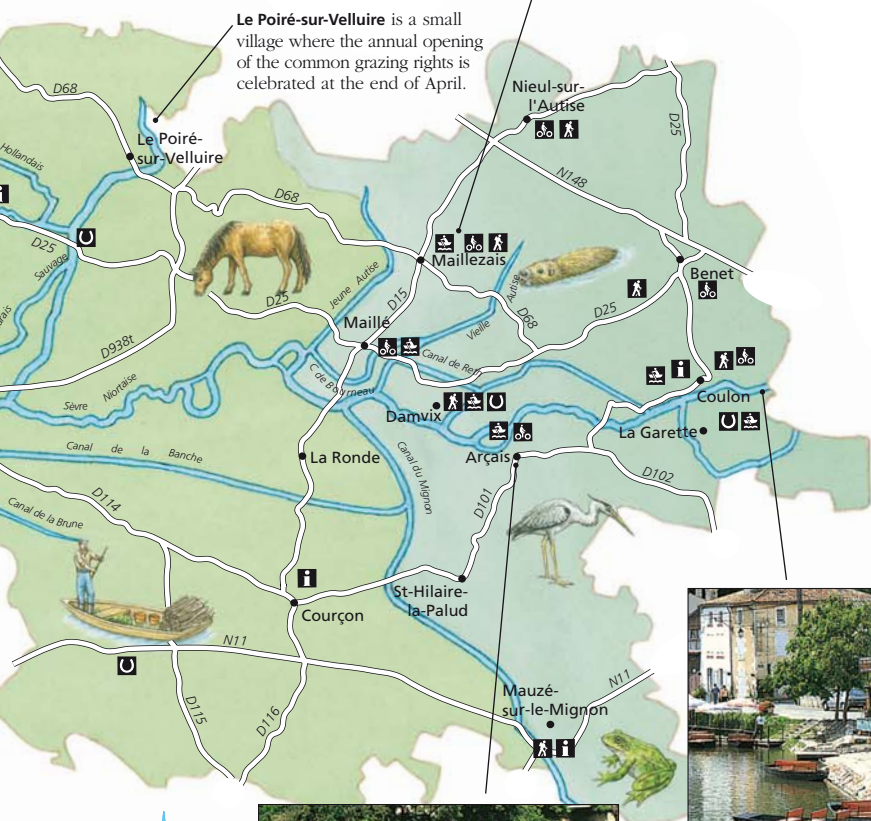
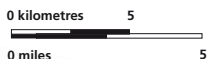
Bicycles for rent



★ **Eglise St-Nicolas, Maillezais**
 The 12th-century Eglise St-Nicolas is in the town of Maillezais, which is situated at the heart of the Marais Poitevin. The church has a Romanesque façade and an unusually spacious interior. To the left of the choir is a beautiful stone statue of the Virgin and Child, dating from the 14th century. The town also has an attractive, ruined 10th-century abbey.

VISITORS' CHECKLIST

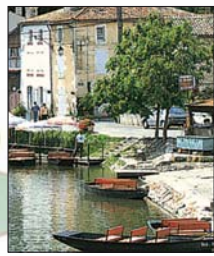
Road map B5. Niort.
 Maillezais (02 51 87 23 01); Coulon (05 49 35 99 29). Good embarkation points for boating: Coulon, Maillezais, Arçais, Sansais, La Garette, St-Hilaire-la-Palud, Damvix; Tourist train: Coulon (05 49 35 02 29). Facilities for hiking tours, renting bicycles, caravans and horses.
www.parc-marais-poitevin.fr



Le Poiré-sur-Velluire is a small village where the annual opening of the common grazing rights is celebrated at the end of April.



★ **Arçais**
 This village in the Venise Verte has a small, stylish port and a 19th-century château.



★ **Coulon**
 Coulon is the largest village in the Marais Poitevin. Its port is always crowded with the narrow, flat-bottomed boats that are traditional in this area.

Exploring the Marais Poitevin



Sign advertising trips in a barque

Early Dykes, built to hold back the tide, did nothing to solve the problem of the rivers' annual flooding of the marshlands. So large canals were dug in the 12th and 13th centuries,

under the supervision of monks who had acquired land rights to marshy areas. The Marais Mouillé (wet marsh) and the Marais Desséché (dry marsh) are still separated by one of these canals: the 13th-century Canal des Cinq Abbés, south of Chailillé-les-Marais, which was a joint effort by five abbeys. Peasants labouring for the monks were rewarded with common grazing rights, some of which are still in force. During the 17th century, Henri IV brought in Dutch engineers to improve the canals, hence the "Dutch Belt" (*La Ceinture des Hollandais*) southeast of Luçon. Current measures to control flooding on lands below high-tide level range from pressure-operated dam gates to bung holes that let water into the plains of the marais in summer.

Eastern Marais

The best way to see this area is by boat. Guided tours are available from a number of towns in the region, and braver souls can hire their own boats from Arçais, Coulon, Damvix, La Garetté or Maillezais.

Coulon

Road map B5. 2,170. Niort. 31 rue Gabriel Auchier (05 49 35 99 29). Fri & Sun. www.marais-poitevin.fr

With its narrow streets of old whitewashed houses and imposing 12th-century church,

Coulon is the main entry point to the Marais Mouillé. The quay on the Sèvre Niortaise river is lively in summer with punt tours and crews embarking on their day's negotiation of the maze of canals. The fish that try to hide under the duck weed can be seen at the **Aquarium de la Venise Verte**. Exhibits explaining local ways of life and the history of reclamation are displayed at the **Maison des Marais Mouillés**.

Aquarium de la Venise Verte

8 pl de l'Église. **Tel** 05 49 35 90 31.

Apr–Oct: daily;

Maison des Marais Mouillés

Pl de la Coutume. **Tel** 05 49 35 81

04. May–Sep: daily; Apr, Oct & school hols: pm only.

Maillezais

Road map B5. 14,500.

Fontenay-le-Comte, then taxi. rue du Dr-Daroux (02 51 87 23 01).

www.maraispoitevin-vendee.com
Maillezais was one of the most important inhabited islands in the former Gulf of Poitou. Whether from a canal boat or

WILDLIFE OF THE MARAIS POITEVIN

An area of diverse natural habitats, including flood-plains, copses, reclaimed agricultural land and estuaries, the Marais Poitevin supports a rich array of wildlife. It is a paradise for bird-watchers, featuring around 130 different species of nesting bird and more than 120 species of migrating and wintering birds. It also supports some 40 species of mammal, 20 species of snake, 30 species of fish and hundreds of insect species.

The stands of elms, alders, willows and hawthorns supply herons with nest sites. Birds of prey such as the European kestrel and the common buzzard are present all year round, as well as breeding pairs of black kites, hobbys and, less commonly, honey buzzards in spring and summer. At night, long-eared and tawny owls scour the marshes for small rodents.

For bird-watchers, the real interest of the area lies in migratory waders and wildfowl. These can be seen on the water meadows of the Marais Mouillé, on the drier expanses of the Marais Desséché and, especially, on the wide mud flats of the Bay of Aiguillon where the Sèvre Niortaise river reaches the sea. Birds to be seen here in autumn and winter include the common redshank, black-tailed godwit and whimbrel, and rare species such as the spotted crane.

The Marais Desséché is also an ideal winter refuge for frogs, toads and grass snakes, and its wide canals, bordered by thick vegetation, are home to two rare species of warbler: the great reed warbler and savi's warbler. Small numbers of another rare species, Montagu's harrier, hunt field voles in the area's reclaimed agricultural land.



The kestrel, one of the Marais' birds of prey



Reed warbler



The ruins of the 10th-century Abbaye St-Pierre at Maillezais

from a viewpoint within the town, the great ruined **Abbaye St-Pierre**, founded in the 10th century, is a dramatic sight. Much of the monastery was destroyed in 1587 by the Protestant armies. The church retains decorated capitals in the 11th-century narthex, the north wall of the nave and the Renaissance transept.

The abbey refectory is still standing, as is the kitchen, now a museum. From 1524 to

1526, Rabelais sought refuge with the monks here. To the right of the entrance is a small chateau, built in 1872 on the ruins of the bishop's palace.

Abbaye St-Pierre

Tel 02 51 87 22 80. ☑ daily.
 ☑ 3 weeks Jan. 📶 🗿 restricted.

Chaillé-les-Marais

Road map B5. 📍 7,000. 📶
 📍 rue de l'An VI (02 51 56 71 17).
 ☑ Thu.

This village, beside cliffs once washed by the tide, was a centre for the reclamation works that established the fields of dark soil in the Marais Desséché. The techniques are explained at the **Maison du Petit Poitou**, a museum covering different aspects of the Marais Poitevin.

Maison du Petit Poitou

Tel 02 51 56 77 30. ☑ Apr-Jun & Sep: daily pm; Jul & Aug: Mon-Sat, Sun pm. ☑ Oct-Mar. 📶 🗿

Western Marais

Much of the early drainage work in the *marais* was led by the monks of **St-Michel-en-l'Herm**. The Benedictine abbey on this former island was originally founded in 682, but has been destroyed and rebuilt several times since then. Its 17th-century chapter house and refectory are the most important remnants.

A short drive to the south, on the River Lay estuary, are the ancient fishing port of **L'Aiguillon-sur-Mer** and the Pointe d'Aiguillon, with its 19th-century Dutch-built dyke. From here, there are marvellous views across the bay to the Ile de Ré and La Rochelle.

Shellfish farming, especially mussels and oysters, is a leading industry along this part of the coast as well as in the estuaries of the western *marais*. Mussels are grown on a forest of posts, which are visible at low tide, or on ropes hung from rafts in the Bay of Aiguillon.



Long-haired Poitou donkey



Male garganey duck



A nesting purple heron

HABITATS

The Marais Mouillé's extensive network of canals provides an ideal refuge for otters, while its many trees provide an ample choice of nest sites for the purple heron.

Migrating birds, such as garganey ducks, and waders, such as the lapwing, thrive in the Marais Desséché.



Otter



A lapwing wintering in the Marais Poitevin



Statue of Napoléon in the main square in La Roche-sur-Yon

La Roche-sur-Yon 6

Road map B4. 53,000.
 rue Georges Clemenceau (02 51 36 00 85). Tue–Sat. Café de l'Été (mid-Jul–mid-Aug).
www.ot-roche-sur-yon.fr

In 1804, La-Roche-sur-Yon was plucked from obscurity by Napoleon, who made it the administrative and military capital of the Vendée region.

The town's rectangular grid layout was centred on a very large parade ground, which is now called **place Napoléon**. In the middle of the square is a statue of the emperor seated astride his horse. As if to deflate these imperial pretensions, a fountain made of squashed oil cans stands playfully outside the Classical theatre building on the place du Théâtre. The 19th-century **Eglise St-Louis** is the largest church in the area.

Restored buildings of the old village are grouped around the place de la Vieille-Horloge. In summer, the oldest of these, **La Maison Renaissance**, hosts an exhibition on the history of La Roche told through models, maps and photographs.

La Maison Renaissance
 Rue du Vieux-Marché. **Tel** 02 51 36 00 85. Jul & Aug: Mon–Sat.

Luçon 7

Road map B4. 10,000.
 square Edouard Herriot (02 51 56 36 52). Wed & Sat. Les Nocturnes Océanes (every other year, mid-Jul). www.lucon.fr

Luçon, once a marshland port, was described by its most famous inhabitant, Cardinal Richelieu (see p56) as the muddiest bishopric in France. Sent there as a 23-year-old bishop in 1608, he went on to reorganize first the town and then the kingdom. Richelieu's statue stands in the square south of the **Cathédrale Notre-Dame**.

The cathedral has an impressive Gothic nave with Renaissance side chapels. One of these contains a pulpit and two canvases painted by Richelieu's gifted successor as bishop, Pierre Nivelles, a naturalist painter. The beautiful cloisters date from the 16th century.



Painted pulpit in Luçon cathedral

Fontenay-le-Comte 8

Road map C4. 15,400.
 Niort. 8 rue du Grimouard (02 51 69 44 99).
 Sat.

Fontenay, sloping down to the River Vendée, was the proud capital of Bas-Poitou until the French Revolution. Napoléon downgraded it in favour of a more centrally-placed administrative centre, La Roche-sur-Yon, from which he could easily control the Royalist Vendée.

Although the city's castle and fortifications were destroyed in 1621, following repeated conflicts in the Wars of Religion, much of its Renaissance quarter survived, and a prosperous postwar town has sprung up around it.

The **Eglise Notre-Dame**, with its commanding spire, is a good place to begin threading through the old streets that lead down from

the place Viète. The building with the corner turret at No. 9 rue du Pont-aux-Chèvres was once the palace of the bishops of Mailleçais. Many Renaissance luminaries, including the poet Nicolas Rapin and François Rabelais (see p100), lived in rue Guillemet, rue des Jacobins and the arcaded place Belliard. Rabelais was later to satirize soirées he attended here during his five years as an unruly young priest in the Franciscan friary (1519–24).

Fontenay's motto "A fountainhead of fine spirits" is incised on the **Quatre-Tias** fountain in the rue de la Fontaine, which was built in the 16th century and embellished in 1899 by Octave de Rochebrune, a local artist and intellectual.

In the **Musée Vendéen**, displays range from Gallo-

Roman archaeology to an excellent scale model of Fontenay during the Renaissance. Several 19th-century portraits convey the suffering of the Vendée in the wake of the 1793 insurrection. There are also displays on daily life in the **bocage**, the wooded region bordering the city.

Once a manor house, the **Château de Terre-Neuve** on the rue de Jarnigande was converted into something



The high Gothic nave of the Cathédrale Notre-Dame in Luçon





The medieval walls surrounding Vouvant, reflected in the River Mère



more imposing for Nicolas Rapin, poet and grand provost, at the beginning of the 17th century. Two hundred years later, Octave de Rochebrune added decorative flourishes, including statues of the Muses.

The interior of the château has beautiful ceilings and two wonderful fireplaces together with a collection of fine art, furniture, panelling and a door brought from the royal study in the Château de Chambord.

Musée Vendéen


Pl du 137e Régiment d'Infanterie.
Tel 02 51 69 31 31.  *May–Sep: Tue–Sun, pm only; Oct–Apr: Wed, Sat & Sun, pm only.* 




Château de Terre-Neuve

Rue de Jarnigande. **Tel** 02 51 69 99 41, 02 51 69 17 75.  *May–Sep: daily; Oct–Apr: groups by appt.* 

Vouvant

Road map B4.  950.

 Fontenay-le-Comte.

 Luçon.  *pl du Bail (02 51 00 86 80).*  *Fête Folklorique (2nd Sun in Aug).*

The Romanesque **Eglise Notre-Dame** in the medieval village of Vouvant has a fantastically carved twin-portal doorway, from which rows of sculptures look down on an arch decorated with a Romanesque bestiary. On the tympanum, Samson wrestles a lion as Delilah advances with her shears.

Vouvant is a starting point for tours of the popular Mervant-Vouvant forest with its signposted walks, biking trails, grottoes and folklore surrounding the serpent-fairy

Mélusine: she tried to lead a life as a woman, but once a week her lower half would turn into a serpent's tail. The **Tour Mélusine** has splendid views of the River Mère.



The twin portals of Vouvant's Eglise Notre-Dame



Portrait of Cathelineau (1824)
 by Anne-Louis Girodet-Trionon

THE VENDÉE UPRISING

Although it may at times seem a footnote to the French Revolution, the Vendée Uprising has never been forgotten in this region. The Revolution outraged the conservative, Royalist people here. Rising taxes, the persecution of Catholic priests and the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793 were then followed by attempts to conscript locals for the Republican army. This triggered a massacre of Republican sympathizers in the village of Machecoul on 11 March by a peasant mob. As the riots flared, peasant leaders, such as the wagoner Cathelineau and the gamekeeper Stofflet, took charge. They were joined by nobles including Charette, Bonchamps and La Roche-Jaquelin under the emblem of the sacred heart.

Using guerilla tactics, the Grand Royal and Catholic Army (Whites) took nearly all the Vendée plus Saumur and Angers by June 1793. They won several battles against Republican armies (Blues) but lost at Cholet on 17 October. Nearly 90,000 Whites fled, vainly hoping for reinforcements to join them. The Blues laid waste to the Vendée in 1794, massacring the populace. More than 250,000 people from the Vendée died.



Detail from the frieze in the church in Pouzauges

Pouzauges 10

Road map C4. 5,700.

La Roche. 28 pl de l'Église (02 51 91 82 46). Thu. www.paysdepouzauges.fr

This small town's ruined 12th-century castle was one of several in the Vendée owned by Gilles de Rais in the 15th century. Once Marshal of France, de Rais' distinguished military career ended in charges of abduction and murder, and he later came to be associated with the story of Bluebeard.

The little **Église Notre-Dame du Vieux-Pouzauges**, with its 13th-century frescoes uncovered in 1948, is one of the treasures of the Vendée. The frescoes depict charming scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and her family. A short audio-visual

programme describes the paintings. On the left, 4 m (12 ft) from the ground, a bestiary frieze, also discovered in 1948, illustrates the months of the year.

Château du Puy-du-Fou 11

Road map B4. to Cholet, then taxi. Tel 02 51 64 11 11. www.puydufou.com

The brick-and-granite Renaissance château of Puy-du-Fou is 2 km (1 mile) from the little village of Les Epesses. Partly restored after its destruction in the Vendée Uprising of 1793–4, it now houses an ambitious theme park, and is the backdrop to the **Cinésécénie**, a thrilling son et lumière spectacle (see pp58–9).

The large theme park, **Le Grand Parc**, offers plenty of entertainment. It has two reconstructed villages, one medieval and one 18th-century, with costumed “villagers” and artisans, and a market town of 1900 along the same lines. Other features include wooded walks, lakes, aquatic organ pipes and puppet theatre. Each day Le Grand Parc stages five “spectacles”. These range from gladiatorial battles and a Viking assault to lively displays of jousting and stunt-riding. But the highlight of the events is the falconry display, during

which falcons, eagles and vultures skim over the heads of seated spectators.

Cinésécénie

Tel 02 51 64 11 11. Jun–early Sep: Fri & Sat. Spectacle begins: Jun & Jul: 10:30pm; Aug–early Sep: 10pm (arrive 1 hour earlier); reservations required. early Sep–May.

Le Grand Parc

May: Sat, Sun & public hols; Jun: Tue, Thu–Sun; Jul & Aug: daily; first two weeks Sep: Sat & Sun. mid-Sep–Apr.



Château de Clisson, a feudal fortress now in ruins

Clisson 12

Road map B4. 6,000.

pl du Minage (02 40 54 02 95). Tue, Wed, Fri. Les Médiévales (first weekend Aug).

www.clisson.com

Clisson, perched on two hills straddling the Sèvre Nantaise river, is notable for its Italianate beauty. After much of the town was destroyed in 1794 by punitive Republican forces following the collapse of the Vendée Uprising, Clisson was rebuilt by two brothers, Pierre and François Cacault, working with the sculptor Frédéric Lemot. Lemot's country home is now the **Parc de la Garenne Lemot**, which celebrates the style of ancient Rome with grottoes and tombs, including Lemot's own.

The evolution of defensive strategies can be followed in the massive, ruined **Château de Clisson**, dating from the 12th century and gradually



“Villagers” at work in Puy-du-Fou’s Grand Parc

For hotels and restaurants in this region see p207 and p219

strengthened in stages up to the 16th century. This was a key feudal fortress for the dukes of Brittany.

Visitors can peer into the dungeons, and into a well with a grisly story behind it: in the vengeful aftermath of the Vendée's defeat, Republican troops butchered and flung into it 18 people who were trying to make bread in the ruins. Next to the château is a fine Renaissance covered market, which survived the destruction because it was used as Republican barracks.

🍀 **Parc de la Garenne Lemot & Maison du Jardinier**

Tel 02 40 54 75 85. 🏠 Park daily.

Maison du Jardinier Tue-Sun (Jul & Aug: daily). 🚫 restricted.

🏰 **Château de Clisson**

Pl du Minage. Tel 02 40 54 02 22.

🏠 Oct-Mar: Wed-Sun; Apr-Sep: Wed-Mon. 📅 25 Dec. 📱 📺

Château de Goulaine 📍

Road map B3. 🚗 Nantes, then taxi (15km/8 miles). 📍 Bas Goulaine.

Tel 02 40 54 91 42. 🏠 Easter-mid-Jun, mid-Sep-Oct: Sat, Sun & pub hols pm; mid-Jun-mid-Sep: Wed-Mon. 📱 📺 grd fl. chât & butterfly park.

www.chateau.goulaine.online.fr

Only a short distance southeast of Nantes, this



The machicolated entrance tower at the Château de Goulaine

is the most westerly of all the limestone-and-slate Loire châteaux. The same family has made wine here for 1,000 years; the building dates from the 15th century with 17th-century wings. One tower survives from the 14th century. Towers rise from the central building: on one, there is a sculpture of Yolande de Goulaine, who is said to have spurred on her soldiers to repulse the besieging English by threatening to stab herself.

The château survived the Revolution because the family sold it to a Dutchman, only to recover it 70 years later. The present marquis, Robert de Goulaine, has restored the château and also opened a butterfly park where exotic species flutter about a large glasshouse. Butterflies also embellish the label of one of his *sur lie* Muscadets. The multicoloured fireplace in the grand salon is typical of the château's rich decorations.

CINÉSCÉNIE

Puy-du-Fou's late-night show is on a grand scale, with more than 1,100 performers and 14,000 seated spectators. It was conceived as a theatre of Vendée history using the full resources of contemporary open-air multimedia techniques. Laser lighting, music, water-jets and fireworks are all carefully orchestrated by computer.

Against the backdrop of the ruined château and its lake, hundreds of locally-recruited actors form living tableaux to dance or grieve, joust or slaughter each other. Horses thunder about, fountains and fireworks soar, bells ring and the château bursts into "flames".

Although the spectacle can be enjoyed for itself, translations of the commentary are available in English, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch to 150 of the seats on the huge stand. Warm clothing and advanced booking are advised.



A fire-eater in the Cinéscénie at Puy-du-Fou

Nantes 14

The ancient port of Nantes was the ducal capital of Brittany for 600 years, but is now considered to be part of the Pays de la Loire. Many of its fine 18th- and 19th-century buildings and houses were built on profits from maritime trade, especially in slaves, sugar, cotton and ship's supplies. The port has been extended downstream towards St-Nazaire, where a modern bridge, the longest in France, crosses the estuary (see p34). This has become an industrial zone attracting trade and breathing new life into the area. Nantes itself remains a vigorous modern city, with good museums, wide open spaces and chic restaurants, bars and shops.



The Neo-Classical theatre in the place Graslin

Exploring Nantes

The most fashionable area of town is the **quartier Graslin**. Constructed between 1780 and 1900, the district's centre-piece is the place Graslin, with its Neo-Classical theatre

approached by a steep flight of monumental steps. The architect, Mathurin Crucy, designed the place Graslin as a rectangle within a semicircle with eight streets radiating from it. The theatre is fronted

by eight Corinthian columns, and statues of eight Muses look down on the square. The wall behind the columns is made of glass, allowing light to stream into the foyer during the day.

Crucy's elegant architecture is seen again in the nearby *cours Cambronne*, a pedestrianized avenue with fine matching houses built in the early 1800s, and in the *place Royale* with its splendid fountain celebrating ocean and river spirits.

On the **Ile Feydeau**, the former island where Jules Verne (see p193) was born, 18th-century town planning combined with middle-class trading wealth helped to

produce beautiful Neo-Classical façades along streets such as *allée Turenne*, *allée Duguay-Trouin* and especially *rue Kervégan* where 18th-century architect Pierre Rousseau occupied No. 30. Wrought-iron balconies rise in pyramidal sequence supported by luxuriant carvings.

Just north of the Ile Feydeau is the *place du Commerce* and the ancient Bourse, an elegant 18th-century building, now the tourist office.

La Cigale

4 pl Graslin. Tel 02 51 84 94 94.

☐ daily. 📞 See **Restaurants** p219.

Facing the theatre, and in dazzling counterpoint to it, stands the famous brasserie-restaurant *La Cigale*, opened on 1 April 1895. This *fin-de-siècle* fantasy was conceived and largely executed by Emile Libaudière. The building is crammed with Art Nouveau motifs including the cicada from which it takes its name. The rich blues of its Italian tiling, its sinuous wrought-iron, bevelled windows and mirrors, sculptures and painted panels and ceilings have made this restaurant a favourite venue for aesthetes and food-lovers for a century.

Passage Pommeraye

☐ daily.

To the east of place Graslin, *rue Crébillon* is the most elegant shopping street in Nantes. It is linked with the



The dining room of Nantes' Art Nouveau brasserie, La Cigale




The interior of the elegant passage Pommeraye

rue de la Fosse by a remarkable covered shopping arcade, the passage Pommeraye. Named after the lawyer who financed its construction, it opened in 1843 and must have astonished the bourgeoisie visiting its 66 shops.

The arcade's three galleries are on different levels, each linked by a handsome wooden staircase, lined with statues and lamps. The decoration is highly ornate. Charming sculpted figures look down on the galleries, lined with shops and rich with busts, bas-reliefs and other details in stone and metal, all beneath the original glass roof.

Musée Dobrée

18 rue Voltaire. **Tel** 02 40 71 03 50.
 Tue–Fri, Sat & Sun pm.  public
 hols.  (except Sun).


Thomas Dobrée (1810–95), son of a rich shipowner and industrialist, spent most of his life building this collection of paintings, drawings, sculpture, tapestries, furniture, porcelain, armour, religious



Part of the carved alabaster altarpiece in the Musée Dobrée

works of art, stamps, letters and manuscripts. The impressive and palatial museum he built for them is based on a plan by the Gothic Revival architect

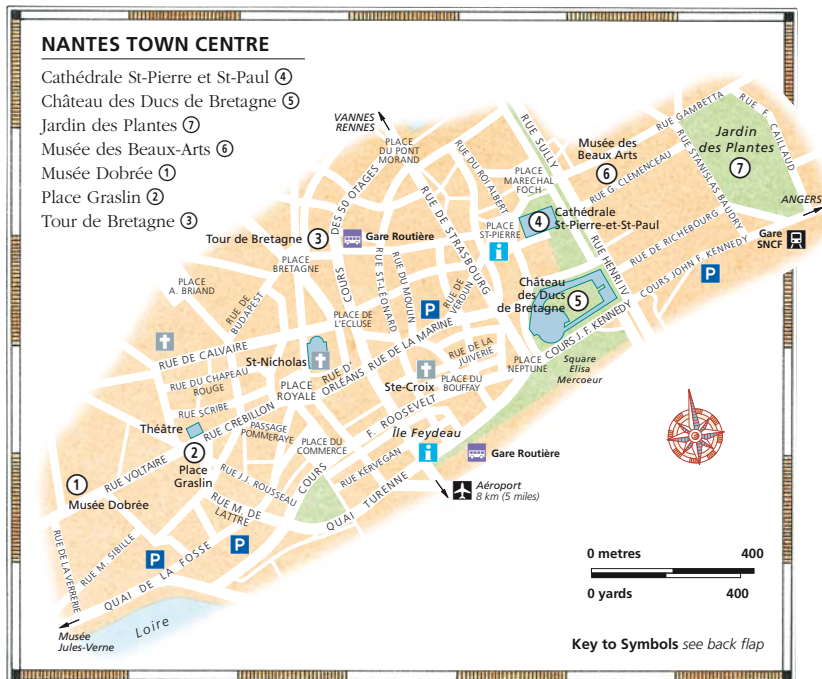
VISITORS' CHECKLIST

Road map B3.  550,000.

 12 km (8 miles) Nantes-Atlantique.  bd Stalingrad.  allée de la Maison Rouge.  pl St-Pierre (08 92 46 40 44 or 02 72 64 04 79).  Tue–Sun.  La Folle Journée (music, Jan); Printemps des Arts (Baroque music, May–Jun); Les Rendez-vous de l'Erdre (jazz, early Sep); Festival des Trois Continents (cinema, Nov).
www.nantes-tourisme.com

Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. One of the reliquaries stands out – it is a gold casket, surmounted by a crown, which contains the heart of Anne of Brittany, who asked for it to be buried in her parents' tomb in Nantes cathedral (see p55). A complete 15th-century altarpiece carved in alabaster statues from Nottingham, England, is another treasure.

In a second part of the complex, a modern museum houses an archaeological collection, with Egyptian, Greek and some locally found Gallo-Roman artifacts.



Around the Château

The Tour de Bretagne, the skyscraper built in 1976 that towers above Nantes, is a landmark dividing the city centre around place du Commerce and place Graslin to the west from the older district around the château and cathedral to the east. From the tower the cours des Cinquante Otages sweeps through the centre where the Erdre canal once flowed. This busy avenue has a memorial at the top, in place du Pont Morand, to the 50 hostages after which it is named. Their execution by the Nazis in reprisal for the assassination of the city's military commandant in 1941 turned many Nantais against the Vichy government.



The façade of the Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul

Château des Ducs de Bretagne

4 pl Marc Elder. **Tel** 02 51 17 49 00.

☐ Wed–Mon (15 May–15 Sep: daily). 🕒 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov, 25 Dec. 📍 château. ♿

The château, surrounded by a landscaped moat and strong curtain walls with round bastions, in the style of the Château d'Angers (see pp 74–5), has recently reopened after 15 years of restoration. This was the birthplace of Anne of Brittany, who became duchess at 11 and then was coerced into marrying Charles VIII of France in 1491 at the age of 14. Charles died at Amboise in 1498 and, the following year, Anne married his successor, Louis XII, in the château chapel.

Anne's influence can be seen in the dormer windows and loggias of the **Grand Logis** to the right of the entrance, a graceful blend of Flamboyant and Renaissance styles. It was begun by her father, Duc François II, who built most

of the château. A smaller royal lodging lies to the west of it. It was here that Henri IV signed the 1598 Edict of Nantes, granting all Protestants permission to worship. The château now hosts a high-tech museum charting the history of Nantes from Gallo-Roman times to the present day.



Gustave Courbet's *The Corn Sifters* (1854) in the Musée des Beaux-Arts

Cathédrale St-Pierre et St-Paul

Place St-Pierre. ☐ daily.

Nantes has the most accident-prone cathedral on the Loire. The story of its construction and destruction over centuries is vividly told in the crypt. Most recently, on 28 January 1972, a workman's match caused an explosion that blew off the roof. Following the resulting fire, a major restoration programme was undertaken. The cathedral has been left with an unusual lightness and unity.

A notable feature of this spacious Flamboyant Gothic building is the splendid black-and-white marble tomb of François II, father of Anne of Brittany, and his two wives, sculpted by Michel Colombe (see pp 116–17). Situated in the southern transept, it was created between 1500 and 1507 and is among the earliest examples of the Renaissance style in France.

Musée des Beaux-Arts

10 rue Georges Clemenceau. **Tel** 02 51

17 45 00. ☐ Wed–Mon. 🕒 public hols. 📍 except 1st Sun of month. ♿

The grandeur of this museum and its collections is a good measure of Nantes' civic pride and wealth in the early 19th century. The galleries are on two levels and surround a huge, arched patio, whose clean lines are an appropriate setting for contemporary exhibitions. Although the museum has some sculptures, it is known mainly for its large collection of paintings,



Nantes' lovely botanical garden, the Jardin des Plantes

especially those representing key movements from the 15th to the 20th centuries.

Notable Italian works from the 14th century include a *Madonna and Saints* (c.1340) by Bernardo Daddi. This came from the collection of the Cacault brothers who restored Clisson (see p189). So did an elegant altarpiece section by Perugino, *Saints Sebastian and Anthony* (c.1475).

Tranquil Dutch and Flemish landscapes and still lifes are offset by a typically robust Rubens, *The Triumph of Judas Maccabaeus* (1635). The master of light, Georges de la Tour, dominates a section of fine, French 17th-century paintings with some of his best work – *The Hurdy-Gurdy Player*, *The Dream of St Joseph* and *The Denial of St Peter*, all dating from the 1620s.

Other highlights of the museum are in the 19th- and early 20th-century sections, beginning with a luxuriant portrait by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Madame de Senonnes* (1814). Talented local painters, including James Tissot of Nantes and Paul Baudry of La Roche-sur-Yon, are represented, as well as the great innovators Eugène Delacroix, Gustave Courbet, Claude Monet and Vasili Kandinsky. Perhaps the most famous picture in the museum is Courbet's memorable scene, *The Corn Sifters* (1854).

🏛️ Musée Jules Verne

3 rue de l'Hermitage. **Tel** 02 40 69 72 52. 🗓️ **Wed–Sat & Sun pm–Mon.**

🆓 **public hols.** 🗺️ 🚶 📺
A remarkably comprehensive display representing the life and work of Jules Verne (1828–1905) starts with a room of furnishings from the house in Amiens in which he wrote most of his books. The museum is packed with mementos, splendidly bound books, cartoons, maps, magic lanterns and models.

🌿 Jardin des Plantes

Bd Stalingrad. **Tel** 02 40 41 90 09.

🕒 **daily.** 🏠 **greenhouse.** 🗺️ 📺
The plants that make up this extensive botanical garden

began as an 18th-century collection of medicinal and exotic plants. The original specimens were brought to Nantes by homecoming ships when a royal decree obliged sea captains to bring exotic plants and seeds back from their travels.

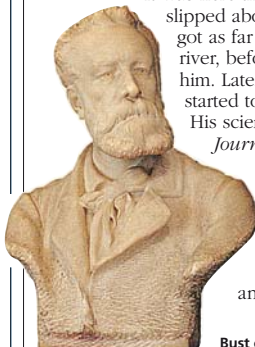
In the mid-19th century, the director, Dr Ecorchard, made changes to the gardens after a visit to London's Kew Gardens. He introduced the English style of landscaping, with ponds and winding paths, transforming the entire area into a delightful park. Here visitors can see Europe's oldest magnolia tree as well as several outstanding displays of camellias.

THE WORLD OF JULES VERNE

Just past the Pont Anne de Bretagne is a disused section of cobbled quay which, in 1839, was lined with boats.

It was here that the 11-year-old Jules Verne slipped aboard a ship to see the world. He got as far as Paimbœuf, a short trip down river, before his father caught up with him. Later, while studying law, Verne started to publish plays and librettos.

His science-fiction novels, including *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873), have been hugely successful, and he is among the most widely read and translated authors in the world.



Bust of Jules Verne (1906) by Albert Roze





TRAVELLERS' NEEDS



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WHERE TO STAY

Loire Valley hotels are as charming as their surroundings. Family-style inns predominate, with dining rooms that are also popular among locals and comfortable, usually old-fashioned, bedrooms. The region also boasts some prestigious *Relais et Châteaux* establishments, often mansions or châteaux converted into luxury hotels with elegant rooms, superb cuisine – and prices to match. A fascinating alternative is staying in a private château or manor



A hotel doorman

house (see pp200–201), which allows you access to privately-owned, often historic buildings as a (paying) guest of the owners. The hotel listings on pages 202–7 give details of establishments throughout the region, in every price category and style. *Gîtes*, the self-catering accommodation for which France is rightly famous, are also widely available in the Loire Valley, allowing you to take advantage of the marvellous range of fresh ingredients on offer in the local markets.

THE CITY HOTEL

The main towns and cities along the banks of the Loire have at least one long-established *grand hôtel* in the centre. These large hotels typically have spacious entrance halls and public rooms, but some of the once large bedrooms may well have been carved up to allow for en suite bathrooms. Rooms are liable to vary considerably in quality, so it is advisable to ask to see the room offered if you have not made a booking in advance. When you make a reservation, be sure to specify a room away from a main

road or busy square (most of these city hotels have some much quieter rooms, which overlook a courtyard). Bars are likely to be frequented by members of the local business community, who also entertain clients in the hotel restaurant, where you can expect classic French cuisine rather than regional dishes.

THE CHÂTEAU HOTEL

A number of châteaux and manor houses in the Loire Valley have been converted into expensive hotels. Often set in well-kept grounds and offering outstanding cuisine, they

range from Renaissance manor houses to huge, turreted 19th-century piles. The **Relais et Châteaux** association, of which many are members, publishes an annual brochure.

Rooms are usually spacious and elegant, with some suites available. Some château hotels also offer more modest accommodation, in outbuildings or even in bungalows in the grounds, enabling you to acquire a taste for *la vie de château* and enjoy the restaurant's cuisine without breaking the bank. If you prefer to be in the main building, specify this when booking – advance reservations are essential.

THE CLASSIC FAMILY HOTEL

These typically French small hotels, generally run by the same family for several generations, are to be found throughout the Loire Valley. The bar and dining room are likely to be widely used by locals, especially for Sunday lunch in country districts. The atmosphere is usually friendly, with helpful staff able to provide leaflets and other information about local sightseeing and shopping.

Most of these hotels have only a small number of rooms, often reasonably spacious and pleasantly furnished with well-worn antiques and flowery wallpaper. Plumbing may be erratic, although many hotels of this type have made efforts to spruce up their bathrooms. Few family hotels in the rural



The elegant *Domaine des Hauts-de-Loire* hotel in Onzain (see p204)



The grand staircase of the Hôtel de l'Univers in Tours (see p204)

areas have single rooms, but these are more common in the region's towns.

Many family hotels belong to the **Logis de France** association, which publishes an annual booklet listing more than 3,000 family-run hotels in France. *Logis* hotels are proud of their restaurants, which tend to specialize in regional cuisine. Most are basic roadside inns, with only a few listed in the main towns, but off the beaten track you can find charming farmhouses and inexpensive hotels.

Many family-run hotels are shut in the afternoon and do not like visitors to arrive then, although hotel guests have keys. Their restaurants are also shut at least one day a week (except possibly in the tourist season).

THE MODERN CHAIN HOTEL

France has an increasing number of modern chain hotels, on the edges of towns or close to motorways.

The cheapest are the one-star, very basic **Formule 1** motels. Two-star chains, which are widely used by French families on a low budget, include **Ibis**, **Campanile** and **Inter Hôtel**. More comfortable, but lacking in atmosphere or regional charm, are the **Kyriad Novotel** and **Mercure** three-star chains. All the chain hotels offer some family rooms, and in some

children can sleep in their parents' room without charge. Most have restaurants where the food is adequate.

THE RESTAURANT-WITH-ROOMS

A few of the well-known and expensive restaurants in the Loire Valley region also have rooms available for overnight guests. The rooms may be as chic as the restaurant. However, they might be modest bedrooms left over from the days before the restaurant was a gourmet's magnet and will therefore allow you to spend an inexpensive night to make up for a budget-busting meal.

In rural areas, it may be practical to spend the night at the restaurant, rather than return to a remote hotel. Check in the listings on pages 214–19 for restaurants-with-rooms.

MEALS AND FACILITIES

Because most visitors to the Loire Valley choose to tour around, few hotels offer full-board rates to those who settle in for holidays. However, for more than three nights in one place, it may be possible to obtain *pension* (full-board) or *demi-pension* (half-board). But half-board may apply only to lunch, which makes sightseeing difficult, and the meals for full-board guests are likely to be less interesting than the fixed-price menus. Always

check whether the room rate includes breakfast. If not, you may prefer to have your breakfast in a nearby café.

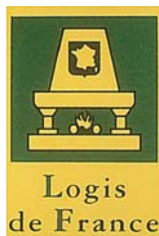
Traditionally, family hotel rooms offer double beds, but twin beds are more likely to be found in city and chain hotels. Prices are usually fixed per room, but single travellers may be allowed a small reduction. Bathrooms with a shower rather than a bath make the room less expensive. Those with only a *cabinet de toilette* (an alcove containing basin and bidet) are the cheapest.

It is perfectly acceptable to ask to view the room before making a decision.

GRADINGS AND PRICES

French hotels are officially graded into one, two, three and four stars, plus four-star deluxe. These categories take account of facilities such as telephones, televisions and en suite bathrooms, but do not necessarily indicate the quality of the decor or service. A few very modest hotels do not rate a star ranking.

Prices rise as the number of stars increases. Rooms may vary in quality within an establishment, so it is not easy to classify hotels solely by price. Rates for a double room start at around 40€ per night without breakfast, although they may start at 150€ in château hotels. Check whether a local tax (*taxe de séjour*) will be added to your bill, but service will already be included. It is usual to leave a small tip for the chambermaid.



Logo of the Logis de France association



Typical Loire Valley manor house hotel



The Domaine des Hautes Roches at Rochecorbon (see p204)

BOOKING

Reserve well in advance for hotels in popular tourist areas during July and August. If booking by telephone it may be necessary to give a credit card number or send a fax confirmation. You may need to speak French to make a telephone booking for some hotels, but letters in English are normally acceptable. Local tourist offices can supply listings of hotels and provide a reservation service (for up to a week in advance).

BED AND BREAKFAST

French bed-and-breakfast accommodation, called *chambres d'hôte*, can vary widely from modest rooms above a hayloft to an elegant room in a manor house. Local tourist offices keep lists of those families willing to take in guests. Some hosts will cook dinner if given advance warning. Many such rooms are registered and inspected by the **Gîtes de France** organization – look out for their green and yellow logo.

SELF-CATERING

Gîtes de France is also the best-known organization monitoring and booking self-catering accommodation. Run by the French government, it offers predominantly rural accommodation, ranging from a cottage to an entire wing of a château. Brochures are available from the departmental offices of Gîtes de France, from the Paris head office or via the Internet (see *Directory*). Booking is essential.

Local tourist offices also have lists of properties for rent within the surrounding area, but it is important to book early.

The lower-priced *gîtes* have only very basic facilities. For more luxury properties, the best way forward is to scour the major US and European newspapers, specialist magazines and the Internet, or use a letting agency. Whatever the price, a holiday in a *gîte* is a great way to experience Loire Valley life.

DIRECTORY

HOTELS

Campanile, Kyriad
Tel 01 64 62 46 46.
www.envergure.fr

Formule 1
Tel 08 92 68 56 85.
www.hotelformule1.com

Ibis, Novotel, Mercure, Sofitel
Tel 08 25 01 20 11.
www.accorhotels.com

Inter Hôtel
Tel 01 42 06 46 46.
www.inter-hotel.fr

Logis de France
83 av d'Italie, 75013 Paris. Tel 01 45 84 83 84.
www.logis-de-france.fr

Relais et Châteaux
Tel (0800) 2000 0002 UK.
Tel (800) 735 2478 US.
www.relaischateaux.com

BED & BREAKFAST/ SELF-CATERING

Gîtes de France
ARART, B.P. 139,
38 rue A-Fresnel,

37171 Chambray-les-Tours. Tel 02 47 48 37 12. Fax 02 47 48 13 39.

Maison des Gîtes de France
59 rue St. Nazaire, 75009 Paris. Tel 01 49 70 75 75.
www.gites-de-france.fr

CAMPING

Les Castels
Manoir de Terre Rouge,
35270 Bonnemain.
Tel 02 23 16 03 20.
www.les-castels.com

CAMPING CARNETS

The Camping and Caravanning Club (UK)
Tel (0845) 130 7631.
www.campingandcaravanning.co.uk

Family Campers & RVers (US)
Tel (800) 245-9755.
www.fcrv.org

HOSTELS

CNOUS
69 quai d'Orsay,
75007 Paris.
Tel 01 44 18 53 00.
www.cnous.fr

Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse
27 rue Pajol, 75018 Paris.
Tel 01 44 89 87 27.
www.fuaj.org

YHA (UK)
Tel (0870) 770 8868.
www.yha.org.uk

AYH (US)
Tel (202) 783-6161.
www.hiayh.org

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Association des Paralysés de France
17 bd Auguste Blanqui
75013 Paris.
Tel 01 40 78 69 00.
www.apf.asso.fr

Mobility

International USA
PO Box 10767,
Eugene, OR 97440.
Tel (541) 343-1284.
www.miusa.org

Tourism for All
c/o Vitalise Holidays,
Shap Road, Kendal,
Cumbria LA9 6NZ.
Tel (0845) 124 9971.
www.holidaycare.org.uk

TOURIST OFFICES

French Govt Tourist Office (UK)
178 Piccadilly,
London W1J 9AL.
Tel (020) 7399 3500.
Fax (020) 7493 6594.
www.franceguide.com

French Govt Tourist Office (US)
444 Madison Ave,
New York, NY 10022.
Tel (514) 288 1904.
www.franceguide.com

CAMPING

Camping is a cheap and fun way of seeing the Loire Valley. Information on camp sites can be obtained from departmental tourist offices. Some of these do not accept visitors without a special camping *carte* (available from the AA and RAC and from the addresses listed in the Directory). French camp sites are graded into four starred categories, but even one-star sites have lavatories, public telephones and running water (although this may be only cold). The top-ranked sites are remarkably well equipped. Always book ahead where possible.

The **Gîtes de France** organization has a guide to unpretentious sites on farm land (ask for *camping à la ferme*), and *camping sauvage* (camping outside official sites) is occasionally possible if you come to an agreement with the landowner. **Les Castels** is an up-market association of sites within the grounds of châteaux and manor houses.

HOSTELS

Hostels provide budget accommodation, but for two or more people sharing a room, an inexpensive hotel will probably cost the same. To stay in a youth hostel, you need to purchase a membership card from the **Youth Hostel Association** in your

own country, or buy an "Ajiste" card from French hostels. Prices include breakfast and linen hire. The website of the **Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse (FUAJ)**, the national youth hostel organization, provides useful information on becoming a member, booking and prices as well as listing addresses and contact information for hostels all over France. **CNOUS**, the Centre National des Oeuvres Universitaires, provides details of university rooms available during the summer vacation.

Gîtes de France is once again a valuable source of information: ask for the *Gîtes d'étape* guide to dormitory accommodation in farmhouses for those on walking, riding or cycling holidays.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

In the UK, **Tourism for All** publishes lists of accessible accommodation and sights in France and provides information on transportation and financial help available for taking holidays. In the US, **Mobility International** publishes several general guides to foreign exchange and travelling abroad with disabilities.

In France, information about accommodation with



Youth hostel in the centre of Tours old town

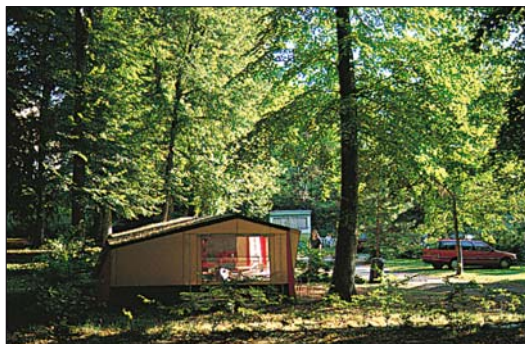
facilities for disabled travellers is available from the **Association des Paralysés de France**, which has also teamed up with **Gîtes de France** and **Logis de France** to recommend country *gîtes*, guest houses and other places to stay that are suitable for people with physical disabilities. These places are listed on a national register that is available free of charge from its website or from the head office of **Gîtes de France**, and they also appear in listings for each *département*. The **Association des Paralysés de France** also has branches in each *département*.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The invaluable guide *The Traveller in France*, listing hotel chains, booking agencies and tour operators specializing in travel to and in France, is published by the **French Government Tourist Office**. The tourist office is also able to supply brochures and booklets for **Logis de France** hotels, **Gîtes de France** and other types of accommodation. **Regional Tourist Committees** will send lists of hotels, hostels, camp sites and private self-catering accommodation. The regional **Loisirs Accueil** centre and Departmental Tourist Committees (in the major city of each department) are also useful sources of information. When you are in the Loire Valley, contact local tourist offices (see p231) for hotel lists and details of local families taking in guests.



Gîtes de France logo



Camping in a forest in the Loire Valley

Staying in a Château

The establishments featured here have been selected from our listings of recommended places to stay on pages 202–7. They offer a unique opportunity to experience the style of life in a private Loire Valley château, spending a night within walls steeped in history, but often with all the comforts of a modern hotel. You will be greeted like a house guest, and efforts are made to make you feel part of the owner's family, who may have lived in the château for many generations. They may also create the atmosphere of a private party at dinner, which can be booked and paid for in advance.



Château de Monhoudou

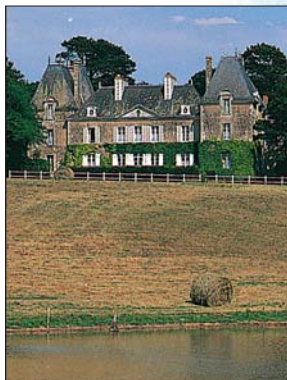
The Monhoudou family have been living in this lakeside château for 19 generations. Peacocks and swans walk the grounds. (See p207.)



Château des Briottières

This 18th-century château, furnished in period and lived in by the same family for six generations, has attractive grounds and a heated pool. (See p202.)

0 kilometres 50
0 miles 50



Château de la Millière

Close to Les Sables d'Olonne, this 19th-century château is set in extensive grounds, complete with an outdoor pool. (See p207.)



Château de Rochecotte

An elegant hotel since the late 1980s, this château set in woodland near Langeais was the residence of Prince Talleyrand. (See p204.)

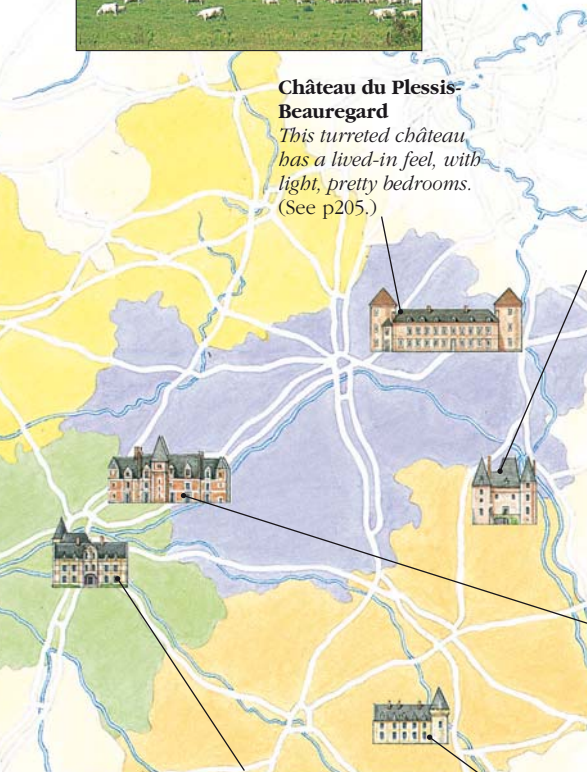


The countryside surrounding the Château du Plessis-Beaugard in the region close to Orléans offers visitors a scene of pastoral tranquility.



Château de la Verrerie
The “Stuarts’ château” (see p154), magically reflected in a lake and surrounded by dense woodland, has spacious, comfortable rooms and an attractive cottage-style restaurant on the grounds. (See p205.)

Château du Plessis-Beaugard
This turreted château has a lived-in feel, with light, pretty bedrooms. (See p205.)



Château de Jallanges
An energetic couple have turned this brick-and-stone Renaissance dwelling, with a period garden and pretty chapel, into a charming home. (See p204.)



Château de la Bourdaisière
A princely greeting (from one of the Princes de Broglie) awaits you in this beautifully modernized château, the birthplace of Gabrielle d’Estrées. (See p203.)



Château de la Commanderie
This 12th-century manor house was once the Commandery of the Knights Templar. Rooms are located in an imposing château added in the 19th century. (See p206.)

Choosing a Hotel

Hotels have been selected across a wide price range on the basis of their facilities, good value and location. All rooms have private bath or shower. Hotels in the Loire Valley are generally not air-conditioned unless stated here. Check ahead also for disabled facilities. For map references see *inside back cover*.

PRICE CATEGORIES

The following price ranges are for a standard double room and taxes per night during the high season. Breakfast is not included, unless specified:

- € Under 60 euros
- €€ 60–90 euros
- €€€ 90–120 euros
- €€€€ 120–160 euros
- €€€€€ over 160 euros

ANJOU

ANGERS Hôtel Mail

8 Rue des Ursules, 49100 Tel 02 41 25 05 25 Fax 02 41 86 91 20 Rooms 26

P €€

Map C3

A charming hotel in a quiet corner of the city centre, this 17th-century building with tastefully decorated bedrooms was once part of a convent. A particularly good breakfast is served in the dining room, and there is also a shaded parking area. Friendly owners. www.hotel-du-mail.com

ANGERS Hôtel d'Anjou

1 Blvd de Maréchal Foch, 49100 Tel 02 41 21 12 11 Fax 02 41 87 22 21 Rooms 53

P P II H A €€€

Map C3

The interior of this city-centre hotel is eclectically decorated with Art Deco mosaics, 17th- and 18th-century fixtures, ornate ceilings and stained-glass windows. The rooms are spacious and elegantly furnished. The on-site Le Salamandre restaurant is recommended. Parking available. www.hoteldanjou.fr

CHAMPIGNÉ Château des Briottières

Route Marigné, 49330 Tel 02 41 42 00 02 Fax 02 41 42 01 55 Rooms 16

P II III H A €€€€

Map C3

A family-run 18th-century château set in a vast English-style park. The rooms (ten in the château and six in a charming cottage) all feature luxurious furnishings, with canopied beds and rich fabrics. Romantic dinners are on offer, as well as cooking classes. Reservations required. www.briottieres.com

CHÊNEHUTTE-LES-TUFFEAUX Le Prieuré

49350 Tel 02 41 67 90 14 Fax 02 41 67 92 24 Rooms 36

P II III H A €€€€

Map C3

This former priory, dating from the 12th century, has magnificent views over the River Loire. The bedrooms have a romantic, refined décor; two also have cosy fireplaces. The elegant restaurant serves gourmet cuisine prepared with the best regional produce, like pike poached in a Chinon wine sauce. www.prieure.com

FONTEVRAUD-L'ABBAYE Le Prieuré St-Lazare

49590 Tel 02 41 51 73 16 Fax 02 41 51 75 50 Rooms 52

P II €€

Map C3

The surroundings of this hotel, housed in the former St-Lazare priory, within the famous royal abbey complex, are stunning. The rooms are elegantly decorated in a modern, contemporary style. The restaurant, located in the ancient cloister, is a gourmet's delight. www.hotelfp-fontevraud.com

GENNES Aux Naulets d'Anjou

18 Rue Croix de Mission, 49350 Tel 02 41 51 81 88 Fax 02 41 38 00 78 Rooms 19

P II III H A €

Map C3

At the edge of the village, in private grounds, is this quiet and comfortable hotel. The genuinely warm welcome compensates for the lack of architectural interest. The rooms are simple and bright, and there are also a reading room and a lounge. The restaurant serves traditional cuisine with no frills. www.hotel-lesnauletsdanjou.com

MONTREUIL-BELLAY Relais du Bellay

96 Rue Nationale, 49260 Tel 02 41 53 10 00 Fax 02 41 52 45 17 Rooms 40

P II III H A T V €

Map C4

The 17th-century main building and stylishly furnished annexe house the guest rooms. All are calm and quiet. Heated pool, sauna, Turkish bath, Jacuzzi and gym are available. The Splendid Hotel, which shares the hotel grounds, has a restaurant and rooms with disabled access. www.splendid-hotel.fr

SAUMUR Hôtel Anne d'Anjou

32–33 Quai Mayaud, 49400 Tel 02 41 67 30 30 Fax 02 41 67 51 00 Rooms 45

P II III H A €€

Map C3

The décor in this elegant mansion, sitting between the River Loire and the château, is sophisticated and romantic. The fine building features an impressive façade, grand staircase and painted ceiling; it also has guest rooms decorated in Empire or contemporary style. Breakfast is served in the courtyard. www.hotel-anneanjou.com

SAUMUR La Croix de la Voulte

Route de Boumois, 49400 Tel 02 41 38 46 66 Fax 02 41 38 46 66 Rooms 4

P II III H A €€

Map C3

This manor house outside Saumur dates from the 15th century. Built at a crossroads (croix), it was the turning point for the royal huntsmen. The bedrooms are all different, with classic furnishings; two also have original Louis XIV fireplaces. In fine weather, breakfast is served at the side of the pool. www.lacroixdelavoulte.com

Key to Symbols see back cover flap

TOURAINÉ

AMBOISE Le Choseul



36 Quai Charles-Guinot, 37400 **Tel** 02 47 30 45 45 **Fax** 02 47 30 46 10 **Rooms** 32

Map D3

An ivy-covered 18th-century manor house set in elegant grounds, with views of the River Loire. The comfortably sized guest rooms are tastefully decorated. The airy restaurant serves sophisticated cuisine, and there are pretty flower-filled walks. www.le-choseul.com

AZAY LE RIDEAU La Petite Loge



15 Route de Tours, 37190 **Tel** 02 47 45 26 05 **Rooms** 5

Map D3

La Petite Loge is a *chambres d'hôte* on a small side street. There are five rooms, each with its own entrance and bathroom. Breakfast is included in the price and served in the dining room, and guests also have use of a kitchen and outdoor barbecue area. <http://lapetitelog.free.fr>

AZAY LE RIDEAU Manoir de la Rémonière



La Chapelle Ste-Blaise, 37190 **Tel** 02 47 45 24 88 **Fax** 02 47 45 45 69 **Rooms** 7

Map D3

This 15th-century manor house in romantic grounds faces the château at Azay le Rideau. Some of the spacious guest rooms are furnished in a traditional style, others are more modern. The interior has been beautifully restored. Outdoor activities include hot-air ballooning, archery and fishing. Perfect for children. www.chateaux-france.com

CHENONCEAUX Hôtel du Bon Laboureur



6 Rue du Dr Bretonneau, 37150 **Tel** 02 47 23 90 02 **Fax** 02 47 23 82 01 **Rooms** 25

Map D3

Near the famous château, this inn is set in its own park. The bedrooms are located in a series of 18th-century stone dwellings. They are small but well equipped, and they all have designer bathrooms. Some are suitable for disabled guests. The oak-beamed restaurant serves good food. www.bonlaboureur.com

CHINON Hostellerie Gargantua



73 Rue Voltaire, 37500 **Tel** 02 47 93 04 71 **Fax** 02 47 93 08 02 **Rooms** 7

Map D4

This hotel, located in the ancient Palais du Bailliage, with its pointed roof and turret, is a local landmark. The guest rooms are comfortable, if somewhat cramped. Each has a theme, from Jeanne d'Arc to the Empire period. Pleasant dining room and terrace. Modern and classic cuisine is served in the restaurant. www.hostelleriegargantua.com

CHINON Château de Marçay



37500 **Tel** 02 47 93 03 47 **Fax** 02 47 93 45 33 **Rooms** 34

Map D4

This elegant hotel is housed in a restored 15th-century fortified château. From the well-appointed bedrooms, guests can enjoy the lovely views over the surrounding parkland and vineyards. Refined and aristocratic atmosphere, impeccable service and cuisine. www.chateaudemarçay.com

COUR-CHEVERNY Hôtels des Trois Marchands



Place de l'Eglise, 41700 **Tel** 02 54 79 96 44 **Fax** 02 54 79 25 60 **Rooms** 24

Map E3

Just a kilometre (0.6 mile) from the château, this ancient coaching inn with a garden has been in the same family since 1865. The bedrooms are comfortably furnished in a rustic style. Take breakfast in one of the three Louis XIII dining rooms. There is also an excellent restaurant. Parking available. www.hoteldes3marchands.com

LOCHES Hôtel de France



6 Rue Picois, 37600 **Tel** 02 47 59 00 32 **Fax** 02 47 59 28 66 **Rooms** 17

Map D4

In an elegant former staging post built of local tufa stone with a traditional slate roof, this hotel is situated near the historic medieval gate. The rooms are simply furnished, comfortable and well maintained. The restaurant serves good regional dishes, such as home-smoked salmon. www.hoteldefranceloches.com

LUYNES Domaine de Beauvois



Route de Cléré-les-Pins, 37230 **Tel** 02 47 55 50 11 **Fax** 02 47 55 59 62 **Rooms** 34

Map D4

This Renaissance manor house built around a 15th-century tower overlooks its own lake. The park is so vast that the pathways have to be signposted. Rooms are large and comfortable, with luxurious marble bathrooms. Guests can enjoy a romantic candlelit dinner in the acclaimed restaurant. www.beauvois.com

MONTBAZON Château d'Artigny



Route de Monts, 37250 **Tel** 02 47 34 30 30 **Fax** 02 47 34 30 39 **Rooms** 55

Map D3

The grounds of this 20th-century château overlook the River Indre. The grandiose classical exterior is matched by a formal Empire-style interior, and the Baroque-style guest rooms are sumptuous. The splendid restaurant serves gourmet regional specialties, as well as presenting a superb wine list. www.artigny.com

MONTLOUIS-SUR-LOIRE Château de la Bourdaisière



25 Rue de la Bourdaisière, 37270 **Tel** 02 47 45 16 31 **Fax** 02 47 45 09 11 **Rooms** 20

Map D3

This château was the favourite residence of Gabrielle d'Estrées, mistress of Henri IV. Now refurbished as luxury accommodation, the hotel has elegant, luxurious guest rooms, some of which feature period furniture. The pavilion in the grounds houses six bedrooms. The gardens are open to the public. www.chateaux-france.com

ONZAIN Domaine des Hauts de LoireRoute d'Herbault, 41150 **Tel** 02 54 20 72 57 **Fax** 02 54 20 77 32 **Rooms** 32**Map D3**

This former hunting lodge with large grounds retains its grandeur, with richly furnished, bright and comfortable guest rooms. This is an unashamedly expensive place to relax. The Michelin-starred restaurant offers cutting-edge and classic food, and a superb selection of local wines. There is also a tennis court. www.domainehautsloire.com

ROCHECORBON Domaine des Hautes Roches86 Quai de la Loire, 37210 **Tel** 02 47 52 88 88 **Fax** 02 47 52 81 30 **Rooms** 15**Map D3**

Surrounded by Vouvray vineyards, near Tours, this hotel was once a monks' residence. Fully restored, it boasts all modern comforts. The underground rooms, hewn into the tufa chalk, are spacious and characterful. The restaurant has one Michelin star, and you can dine in the château or alfresco, on the terrace. www.leshautsroches.com

ST-PATRICE Château de RochecotteSt-Patrice, Langeais, 37130 **Tel** 02 47 96 16 16 **Fax** 02 47 96 90 59 **Rooms** 35**Map D3**

Situated a short way from Langeais, Prince Talleyrand's château was completely renovated, and it opened as an elegant hotel in 1986. It is set in a charming, tranquil park with woodland. The interior is decorated sumptuously; the guest rooms are large, and each has a view. www.chateau-de-rochecotte.fr

SALBRIS Le Parc8 Avenue d'Orléans, 41300 **Tel** 02 54 97 18 53 **Fax** 02 54 97 24 34 **Rooms** 23**Map E3**

A large beautiful house set in its own park with 100-year-old trees. Classic or modern, the bedrooms are comfortable and calm. Features include high ceilings, fireplaces and period furniture. Some rooms have private balconies that overlook the magnificent grounds. www.leparcsalbris.com

TOURS Hôtel de l'Univers5 Boulevard Heurteloup, 37000 **Tel** 02 47 05 37 12 **Fax** 02 47 61 51 80 **Rooms** 85**Map D3**

Statesmen and royals have stayed at this luxurious hotel; a picture gallery depicts the most famous guests since 1846. The elegant architecture continues in the large, prettily furnished bedrooms, some of which are accessible to the disabled. The restaurant serves classic gourmet cuisine, and there is a private garage. www.hotel-univers.fr

VOUVRAY Château de Jallanges37210 **Tel** 02 47 52 06 66 **Fax** 02 47 52 11 18 **Rooms** 7**Map D3**

This imposing Renaissance brick château, now a family home, offers comfortable rooms furnished with style. Guests are taken on a guided tour from the private chapel to the top of the turrets, from where there is a superb view. The table d'hôte caters for guests on reservation only. A good base for exploring Touraine. www.jallanges.com

BLÉSOIS AND ORLÉANAIS**BEAUGENCY** Hôtel de la Sologne6 Place St-Firmin, 45190 **Tel** 02 38 44 50 27 **Fax** 02 38 44 90 19 **Rooms** 16**Map E3**

This typical Sologne stone building on the main square overlooks the ruined castle keep of St-Firmin. The bedrooms are small, but cosy and bright, and simply furnished. There is a pretty flower-decked patio where breakfast can be taken. Private parking is also available. www.hoteldelasologne.com

BLOIS Le Monarque61 Rue Porte Chartraine, 41000 **Tel** 02 54 78 02 35 **Fax** 02 54 74 82 76 **Rooms** 22**Map E3**

Located near the Tour Beauvoir, the château and main shopping area, Le Monarque has an exceptionally convivial atmosphere. The rooms are comfortably furnished, smartly decorated and well equipped, with Internet access. Two family rooms also available. The restaurant serves traditional French cuisine. <http://annedebretagne.free.fr>

CHAMBORD Du Grand St-MichelPlace St-Louis, 41250 **Tel** 02 54 20 31 31 **Fax** 02 54 20 36 40 **Rooms** 39**Map E3**

Across the lawn from the château, this country house has simple but comfortable rooms, some with views. The vast restaurant is decorated with trophies, photographs and pictures, all related to hunting. There is also a lovely terrace from where guests can enjoy views of the château. Closed for a few weeks in winter. hotelstmichel@wanadoo.fr

CHEVERNY Château du BreuilRoute de Fougères, 41700 **Tel** 02 54 44 20 20 **Fax** 02 54 44 30 40 **Rooms** 16**Map E3**

This 18th-century château is set in extensive grounds. The owners have been refurbishing the interior, and the spacious, luxurious bedrooms are now equipped with Internet access. Magnificent antiques furnish both the guest rooms and the salons. The restaurant is open for residents only. Closed Jan–mid-Mar. www.chateau-du-breuil.fr

GIEN La Poularde13 Quai de Nice, 45500 **Tel** 02 38 67 36 05 **Fax** 02 38 38 18 78 **Rooms** 9**Map F3**

On the banks of the River Loire, just steps away from the Musée de la Faïencerie, is this functional hotel. Although somewhat lacking in charm, the 19th-century bourgeois house offers pleasant rooms simply furnished with Louis-Philippe furniture. The restaurant serves excellent food. lapoularde2@wanadoo.fr

LA FERTÉ-ST-AUBIN L'Orée des Chênes

P II & ☰ €€€€

Route de Marcilly, 45240 **Tel** 02 38 64 84 00 **Fax** 02 39 64 84 20 **Rooms** 26**Map E3**

This recently built hotel-restaurant complex lies in the heart of the Sologne countryside and reflects local architecture. Located in its own parkland, it is an ideal base for fishing and walking. The comfortable rooms are furnished with style and have Internet access. The restaurant serves regional dishes. Sauna available. www.loreedeschenes.fr

MUIDES SUR LOIRE Château de Colliers

P III & ☰ €€€€€

41500 **Tel** 02 54 87 50 75 **Fax** 02 54 87 03 64 **Rooms** 5**Map E3**

This château, in the woods a short drive east of Blois, is both rustic and grand. In the 18th century, it belonged to a governor of Louisiana. There is a delightfully romantic room, at the top of the building, with Empire-period furniture and a roof terrace. Breakfast is included in the price. www.chateauxandcountry.com

ORLÉANS Jackotel

☑ P ☰ €

18 Cloître St-Aignan, 45000 **Tel** 02 38 54 48 48 **Fax** 02 38 77 17 59 **Rooms** 61**Map E2**

This hotel stands in the medieval centre of Orléans, near the cathedral, surrounded by a good selection of restaurants. A former cloister, it features a charming inner courtyard that leads you to the Place St-Aignan, just in front of the church. Very comfortable rooms. Parking is also available. www.jackotel.com

ROMORANTIN-LANTHENAY Grand Hôtel du Lion d'Or

☑ P III ☰ €€€€€€

69 Rue G Clémenceau, 41200 **Tel** 02 54 94 15 15 **Fax** 02 54 88 24 87 **Rooms** 16**Map E3**

This former Renaissance mansion house is now a gastronomic must in this historic town. From the outside, the building is unimpressive, but the interior has instant charm. The luxury bedrooms lead off from a cobbled courtyard, and the décor is authentic Napoleon III. Formal gardens. www.hotel-liondor.fr

ST-LAURENT NOUAN Hôtel Le Verger

P & ☰ €€

14 Rue du Port-Pichard, 41220 **Tel** 02 54 87 22 22 **Fax** 02 54 87 22 82 **Rooms** 14**Map E3**

Ideally placed for visiting the famous Loire châteaux, and only 8 kilometres (5 miles) from Chambord, this 19th-century bourgeois house has a pretty interior courtyard and fountain. The rooms are well maintained and spacious. The wooded park around it ensures a peaceful stay. Breakfast is included in the price. www.hotel-le-verger.com

SOUVIGNY-EN-SOLOGNE Ferme des Foucault

☑ P III ☰ €€€

Ménéstreau-en-Villette, 45240 **Tel/Fax** 02 38 76 94 41 **Rooms** 3**Map F4**

Deep in the forest in the Sologne countryside is this attractive redbrick-and-timber farmhouse. The immense bedrooms are cosy, with superb bathrooms; one even has a wood-burning stove. The other rooms are decorated with paintings by the owner's daughter. Friendly, relaxed atmosphere. www.ferme-des-foucault.com

VENDÔME Capricorne

P III & ☰ €

8 Boulevard de Trémault, 41100 **Tel** 02 54 80 27 00 **Fax** 02 54 77 30 63 **Rooms** 31**Map D3**

A standard hotel near the train station. The rooms are brightly decorated; although not spacious, they are well equipped, and many overlook a pretty interior courtyard. There is also a good choice of restaurants: one serves traditional cuisine, while the other offers a buffet menu. Closed Christmas to early Jan. www.hotelcapricorne.com

VITRY-AUX-LOGES Château de Plessis-Beaugregard

☑ P III & ☰ €€€

45530 **Tel** 02 38 59 47 24 **Fax** 02 38 59 47 48 **Rooms** 3**Map F2**

Located beside the Forêt d'Orléans, this turreted brick château has light, airy rooms. Authentically furnished in the Empire style, all rooms overlook the flower-filled gardens. Chat with your hosts at breakfast or in the evening around the fireplace. Bikes available. Breakfast is included in the price. www.chateaux-france.com

BERRY**ARGENTON-SUR-CREUSE Manoir de Boisvillers**

P III ☰ €€€

11 Rue du Moulins de Bord, 36200 **Tel** 02 54 24 13 88 **Fax** 02 54 24 27 83 **Rooms** 16**Map E4**

A surprising find in the heart of the Old Town, this is an 18th-century manor house with an ivy-clad façade and a cosy atmosphere. Its tree-lined garden centres around the outdoor pool. The rooms are spacious and charming, with tasteful furnishings. Most of them have a view of the Creuse Valley. Closed Jan. www.manoir-de-boisvillers.com

AUBIGNY-SUR-NÈRE Château de la Verrerie

P III & ☰ €€€€€

Oizon, 18700 **Tel** 02 48 81 51 60 **Fax** 02 48 58 21 25 **Rooms** 12**Map F3**

This early Renaissance château is owned by the charming de Vogüé family. As well as spacious rooms, all with views of the park or lake, the hotel has a restaurant located in an 18th-century half-timbered house. Tennis, boating, archery, fishing and hot-air ballooning are all available. Closed mid-Dec-Feb. www.chateaudelaverrerie.com

BOURGES Le Berry

☑ P III ☰ €€€

3 Place du Général Leclerc, 18000 **Tel** 02 48 65 99 30 **Fax** 02 48 24 29 17 **Rooms** 64**Map F4**

Opposite the train station, this impersonal, austere grand building has a completely refurbished interior. Rooms are modern, with bright fabrics, contemporary furniture and African paintings. The restaurant also has an exotic décor, and the cuisine takes you on a world tour of flavours. Wi-Fi equipped. www.le-berry.com

BRINON-SUR-SAULDRE La Solognote

P II €

34 Grande Rue, 18410 **Tel** 02 48 58 50 29 **Fax** 02 48 58 56 00 **Rooms** 13

Map F3

A charming family-run inn made up of three buildings housing comfortable, tastefully decorated rooms. All overlook the pretty courtyard garden, where breakfast can be taken. The restaurant is airy and bright, with exposed oak beams and antique furniture, and it serves excellent regional cuisine. Closed 3 weeks Mar. www.lasolognote.com

ISSOUDUN La Cognette

P III €€€

26 Rue des Minimes, 36100 **Tel** 02 54 03 59 59 **Fax** 02 54 03 13 03 **Rooms** 14

Map E4

Each room in this attractive hotel with flower-laden window boxes is individually decorated: there's an immaculate white décor for the Blanche de Castille room and flamboyant red for the Balzac and Madame Anska. Most open out on to a pretty terrace garden, where breakfast can be enjoyed in summer. Wi-Fi equipped. www.la-cognette.com

LE BLANC Domaine de l'Etape

P €€

Route de Bélâbre, 36300 **Tel** 02 54 37 18 02 **Fax** 02 54 37 75 59 **Rooms** 35

Map D4

This small, peaceful 18th-century château is set in an immense area of parkland. The rooms are decorated in different styles, some with antique furnishings. All are equipped with modern facilities. Guests can use the lake for angling, boating and swimming, and bikes are also available. Closed Oct–Mar. www.domaineetape.com

ST-AMAND-MONTROND Château de la Commanderie

P II €€€€€€

Farges-Alichamps, 18200 **Tel** 02 48 61 04 19 **Fax** 02 48 61 01 84 **Rooms** 7

Map F4

This charming 12th-century manor house was once the home of the Commander of the Knights Templar. Today elegant accommodation is offered both here and in a 19th-century château, as well as candle-lit dinners. www.chateaudelacommanderie.com

ST-CHARTIER Château de la Vallée Bleue

P III €€€€

Route de Verneuil, 36400 **Tel** 02 54 31 01 91 **Fax** 02 54 31 04 48 **Rooms** 15

Map E4

This 19th-century château is now a luxury hotel with two pools (one for children) and a putting green. The best rooms are on the first floor of the main building, but there is also a suite in the ancient dove tower. Dine on the terrace in summer or at the fireside in winter. Closed mid-Nov–mid-Mar. www.chateauvalleebleue.com

SANCERRE Château de Beaujeu

P €€€€

Sens-Beaujeu, 18300 **Tel** 02 48 79 07 95 **Fax** 02 48 79 05 07 **Rooms** 3

Map F3

Ideally located for visiting the Sancerre wine cellars, this château features beautiful grounds that extend down to the River Sauldre. The décor is old-fashioned, but the rooms are spacious, with superb views. Breakfast is served in the banquet hall; table d'hôte dinner can be reserved. Closed mid-Nov–Mar. www.chateau-de-beaujeu.com

THAUMIERS Château de Thaumiers

P III €€€€

Thaumiers, 18210 **Tel** 02 48 61 81 62 **Fax** 02 48 61 81 82 **Rooms** 10

Map F4

The de Bonneval family welcome you to this 18th-century fortress set in a vast park. Some rooms are decorated with elegant furnishings, others with old-fashioned floral fabrics and wall coverings. Tennis courts, Internet access and babysitting on site. Breakfast is included; table d'hôte by reservation. Closed Oct–Easter. www.chateauxhotels.com

VALENÇAY Relais du Moulin

P III €€

44 Rue Nationale, 36600 **Tel** 02 54 00 38 00 **Fax** 02 54 00 38 79 **Rooms** 54

Map E4

The guest rooms at this recently established hotel complex beside an ancient mill are functional, with simple modern furnishings, soundproofing and Internet access. The dining room has an attractive terrace overlooking the garden, and the restaurant serves traditional cuisine. Closed mid-Nov–Mar. www.hotel-lerelaisdumoulin.com

NORTH OF THE LOIRE**CHARTRES Le Grand Monarque**

P III €€€

22 Place des Epars, 28005 **Tel** 02 37 18 15 15 **Fax** 02 37 36 34 18 **Rooms** 60

Map E2

Part of the Best Western network, this converted 16th-century staging post, with massively thick stone walls, has been managed by the same family since the 1960s. The rooms are simple, but all have Wi-Fi internet access. There is a pleasant bar-brasserie, and a renowned gastronomic restaurant, Le Georges. www.bw-grand-monarque.com

DREUX Le Beffroi

€€

12 Place Métézeau, 28100 **Tel** 02 37 50 02 03 **Fax** 02 37 42 07 69 **Rooms** 15

Map E1

The rooms in this charming hotel on a pedestrianized street have a view of either the River Blaise or the church of St-Pierre. The décor is contemporary, and the owner, an ex-journalist, gives everybody a warm welcome. Internet access is available, and there is a car park nearby. Closed first 2 weeks Aug. hotel.beffroi@club-internet.fr

LA CHARTRE-SUR-LE-LOIR Hôtel de France

P III €

20 Place de la République, 72340 **Tel** 02 43 44 40 16 **Fax** 02 43 79 62 20 **Rooms** 24

Map D3

This ivy-clad hotel in the city centre has a delightful garden bordering the river. The good-value standard-sized bedrooms are simply furnished but comfortable. The bar and the brasserie are also basic, but the dining room is pleasant and serves generous portions of good food. Pretty garden terrace. hotelfrance@worldonline.fr

LE MANS Ibis Le Mans Centre*Quai Ledru-Rollin, 72000* **Tel** 02 43 23 18 23 **Fax** 02 43 24 00 72 **Rooms** 85**Map** C2

This standard Ibis hotel is pleasantly situated overlooking the River Sarthe and the Old Quarter. This is the best budget hotel in Le Mans, with simple, well-equipped rooms (two with disabled access) and a good buffet breakfast. Wi-Fi Internet is also available. The café-brasserie is open only for dinner. www.ibishotel.com

LE MANS Domaine de Chatenay*St-Saturnin, 72650* **Tel** 02 43 25 44 60 **Fax** 02 43 25 21 00 **Rooms** 8**Map** C2

Situated in the countryside outside Le Mans, this elegant 18th-century manor house surrounded by parkland is the ideal place to relax. The spacious rooms are stylishly furnished with period furniture. Breakfast is taken in the First Empire dining room, and candlelit dinners can be booked in advance. Internet access. www.domainedechatenay.com

LOUÉ Hôtel Ricordeau*13 Rue de la Libération, 72540* **Tel** 02 43 88 40 03 **Fax** 02 43 88 62 08 **Rooms** 19**Map** C2

A former coaching inn, this lovely stone building has comfortable rooms, each decorated in a different style; all are well equipped and have Internet access; some have air-conditioning. The superb garden leads down to the River Vègre. Breakfast is copious, with cold meats, cheeses, fruit and home-made jams. www.hotel-ricordeau.fr

MONHOUDOU Château de Monhoudou*72260* **Tel** 02 43 97 40 05 **Fax** 02 43 33 11 58 **Rooms** 5**Map** D2

The 19th generation of the de Monhoudou family still owns and runs this delightful 18th-century château. Guests can stroll in the gardens among horses, sheep, swans and peacocks. The vast rooms, all with views of the park, are furnished with antiques, and some bathrooms have spa baths. www.monhoudou.com

ST-JULIEN-LE-PAUVRE Château de la Renaudière*72240* **Tel** 02 43 20 71 09 **Fax** 02 43 20 75 56 **Rooms** 3**Map** C2

This gracious château owned by the Marquis de Mascureau is set among rolling meadows between Le Mans and Laval. All the rooms have private bathrooms and are tastefully furnished with period furniture. The charming owners enjoy introducing visitors to the region. Breakfast is included. Closed Nov–Apr. www.bienvenue-au-chateau.com

LOIRE-ATLANTIQUE AND THE VENDÉE**LE CROISIC Fort de l'Océan***Pointe du Croisic, 44490* **Tel** 02 40 15 77 77 **Fax** 02 40 15 77 80 **Rooms** 9**Map** A3

Seventeenth-century ramparts enclose this former fortress facing the sea, but nothing remains of the harsh military lifestyle. Comfort is key, and the guest rooms are stylish and plush; one is equipped for disabled visitors. The restaurant serves wonderful seafood. www.fort-ocean.com

LES SABLES D'OLONNE Château de la Millière*St-Mathurin, 85150* **Tel** 02 51 22 73 29 **Fax** 02 51 22 73 29 **Rooms** 5**Map** A4

This elegant 19th-century château with a vast area of parkland is situated close to both the Atlantic coast and the town centre. The rooms are beautifully furnished with hangings and antiques. The library/billiard room is available to guests, and there is also on-site fishing in the private lake. Closed Oct–May. www.chateau-la-milliere.com

MISSILAC La Bretesche*Domaine de la Bretesche, 44780* **Tel** 02 51 76 86 96 **Fax** 02 40 66 99 47 **Rooms** 32**Map** A3

One of the most beautiful hotel-restaurants in the area. The rooms are located in the converted outbuildings that form a square around an inner courtyard, beside the majestic castle. Attractive décor and rich furnishings create a truly spacious ambience. Parkland, lake, tennis courts and golf course. Closed Feb. www.bretesche.com

NANTES Jules Verne*3 Rue de Couëdic, 44000* **Tel** 02 40 35 74 50 **Fax** 02 40 20 09 35 **Rooms** 65**Map** B3

This modern hotel stands in a busy pedestrianized square in the city centre, well placed to visit the sights. The reasonably sized comfortable rooms come equipped with satellite TV and Wi-Fi Internet access; some have disabled access, too. Good buffet breakfast. Underground municipal parking is available nearby. www.arcantis-hotels.com

NANTES Hôtel La Pérouse*3 Allée Duquesne, 44000* **Tel** 02 40 89 75 00 **Fax** 02 40 89 76 00 **Rooms** 46**Map** B3

This chic hotel with a Zen atmosphere opened in 1993. The rooms have glossy wooden flooring and crisp contemporary furniture; they are reasonably quiet. The breakfast buffet is good, and there is free Wi-Fi Internet connection and free access to a nearby gym for guests. Municipal parking is available nearby. www.hotel-laperouse.fr

NOIRMOUTIER-EN-L'ISLE Hotel Fleur de Sel*Rue des Saulniers, 85330* **Tel** 02 51 39 09 07 **Fax** 02 51 39 09 76 **Rooms** 35**Map** A4

This hotel stands in a vast landscaped Mediterranean-style garden with a swimming pool. Some guest rooms are decorated with English-style pine and face the pool; others have a marine theme and a private terrace. Tennis courts, practice golf and bikes are available. The chef serves some of the best cuisine in the Vendée. www.fleurdesel.fr

WHERE TO EAT

In this generally prosperous region, with its excellent local produce, eating out is popular, and interest in cuisine is high even by the standards of this food-loving country. Lunch remains the main meal of the day: even in larger towns such as Tours, Orléans or Nantes, most office workers return home during their two-hour lunch break. Restaurants serve lunch from about noon, and it can be hard to find one willing to serve

MENU
A PARTIR
DE 62^{fr}



A café sign
in Berry

a meal if you arrive after 1pm, although cafés and brasseries in the towns are more flexible. Dinner is served from about 8pm onwards (sometimes earlier in the main tourist areas). Beware of last orders, which may be as early as 9pm, especially in country districts. The restaurants on pages 214–19 have been carefully selected for their excellence of food, decor and ambience, and cover all price ranges.



An outdoor café in the historic heart of Richelieu

TYPES OF RESTAURANT

In country districts and small towns, the most pleasant restaurants are often to be found in hotels, especially if they belong to the **Logis de France** association, which puts particular emphasis on good (and good value for money) regional cooking. Larger towns offer a broad range of places to eat, from basic pizzerias and crêperies to chic, gourmet establishments via cafés and brasseries. Cafés are handy for a snack, coffee or apéritif, or as places from which to watch the world go by, and brasseries are good for quick meals. Unlike restaurants, brasseries and cafés generally serve a limited range of dishes outside regular mealtimes.

The Loire also has an ever-widening choice of restaurants specializing in foreign cuisines (most commonly Vietnamese and North African).

VEGETARIAN FOOD

True vegetarians do not fare well in France. It can be more convenient to head for a Vietnamese restaurant or a pizzeria, although in some of the university towns, the occasional vegetarian restaurant may be found. A few large cafés or brasseries in the tourist districts of major towns sometimes offer a small number of vegetarian dishes, and omelettes and other egg-based dishes are usually available. Alternatively, ask the chef for the meat or fish to be left out of a salad. In full-scale restaurants, it is essential to enquire in advance whether it is possible to have a vegetarian dish specially prepared. Non-meat-eaters need have no fears: Loire Valley restaurants serve excellent fish dishes, and cafés and brasseries usually offer at least one fish dish on the menu.

READING THE MENU

The vast majority of Loire Valley restaurants offer at least one *menu*, or fixed-price menu. You will often find a range of *menus*, culminating in an expensive *menu gastronomique* (gourmet meal), which may be available only if all members of your party choose it. Look out for a *menu régional* or *menu du terroir*, which will feature a selection of regional specialities.

The less expensive menus often feature starters such as local *charcuterie* (pork specialities), a salad or *crudités* (raw vegetables), whereas gourmet menus offer more complex dishes. Vegetables are often served separately.

Cheese is considered a separate course, served between the main course and dessert – local goats' cheeses are likely to predominate.



A typical Loire Valley restaurant terrace

Many restaurants, especially in country districts, do not have a *carte* from which individual dishes may be selected. If they do, eating *à la carte* almost always works out to be more expensive than choosing from a fixed-price menu, since it is not considered acceptable to skip the starter and order only a main dish (skipping dessert is more acceptable).

Cafés and brasseries offer a *plat du jour* (dish of the day), often with a regional flavour, along with standard French fare such as steak or fish with fried potatoes, complemented by a range of salads or vegetables.



Auberge du Moulin de Chaméron at Bannegon in Berry (see p217)

MAKING RESERVATIONS

It is always advisable to book tables in advance at restaurants near the well-known châteaux, especially during the main tourist season (Easter to late September). If you enjoy eating alongside the residents at local restaurants in towns, which rarely take reservations over the telephone, make sure you arrive early. Restaurants in country districts are often closed on Sunday evenings as well as for at least one whole day during the week.

DRESS CODE

Most French people take considerable trouble with their appearance but, with the exception of a few very chic and expensive places, formal dress is not required, and ties are rarely a necessity even in the top restaurants, providing you are neatly turned out.



The rustic Auberge de la Petite Fadette in Nohant (see p218)

HOW MUCH TO PAY

It is difficult to classify restaurants by price, as most offer a range of fixed-price meals. Prices can be as low as 10€ or as high as 75€, but good, copious meals can be had everywhere for between 25€ and 30€.

A service charge of 12.5–15 per cent is usually included in the prices on menus, which are posted up outside for you to study before venturing in. It is usual to leave an extra euro or two as an additional tip. In more expensive restaurants, cloakroom attendants are given about 1€ and lavatory attendants expect a small tip of about 30 cents.

Visa credit cards are widely accepted. Check first with the restaurant to find out whether American Express, MasterCard or Diners Club cards can be used.

CHILDREN AND PETS

Children are well received everywhere in the region, but they should be discouraged from leaving their seats and wandering about during the meal. High chairs are sometimes available. Some restaurants offer special low-priced children's menus (*repas d'enfant*).

Since the French are great dog lovers, well-behaved small dogs are usually accepted at all but the most elegant restaurants (but are often banned from food shops). Do not be surprised to see your neighbour's lapdog sitting on the next door *banquette*.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

Because few restaurants make special provision for wheelchairs, it is wise when booking to mention that you or one of your party need space for a *fauteuil roulant*. This will ensure you get a conveniently located table and assistance, if needed, when you arrive. A list on page 198 gives names and addresses of various organizations that offer advice to disabled travellers to the Loire Valley region.

SMOKING

French legislation requires restaurateurs to offer the choice of smoking or non-smoking areas, but the latter is often no more than a table or two in an alcove with a "No Smoking" sign pinned to the wall. Bars and cafés are likely to be smoke-filled. If you are sensitive to smoke, it may be wise to sit at an outside table (weather permitting) or to ask for a window table.



The elegance of the Michelin-starred Château de Noirieux (see p214)

The Flavours of the Loire Valley

This huge area can take pride in a truly diverse range of top quality produce. The seafood from its Atlantic coastline, the freshwater fish from its many rivers, the game birds from its royal hunting forests, the bounty of fresh vegetables and the tiny white mushrooms that flourish in the darkness of its caves, all have helped to create a cuisine fit for kings. Many of the Loire's typical fish and meat dishes have become classics, now found all over France. Others remain very much local treats, using the region's finest and freshest produce, to be sought out and savoured in its many fine restaurants.



Fresh hake for sale, direct from the port, in the Loire-Atlantique

MEAT AND CHARCUTERIE

Free-range chickens are raised in the Sarthe, Touraine and Orléanais, and duck in the Vendée. Anjou and Mayenne are home to grass-fed cattle, and the Berry to hardy sheep. The forests and lakes of the Sologne are the domain of deer, hare, wild boar, pheasant and partridge.

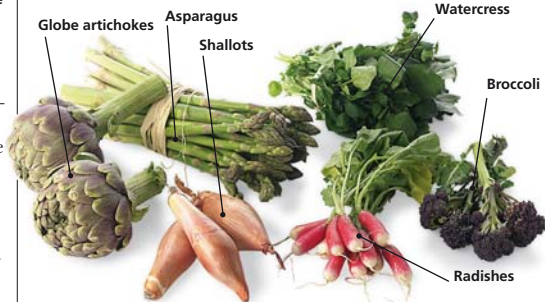
The main charcuterie is *rillettes* (shredded and potted slow-cooked pork), a speciality of Tours and the Sarthe. *Rillons* (large chunks of crunchy fried salted belly pork) are also popular. The Vendée produces some excellent cured ham. The Sologne is noted for its terrines, Chartres for its excellent game pies and Berrichon for a *pâté* that comes baked in pastry with slices of hard-boiled egg.

FISH

The ports of the Loire-Atlantique and the Vendée offer up a variety of fish and shellfish. La Turballe is the main sardine port on the Atlantic coast. The Ile de Noirmoutier is known for line-caught fish, lobster and oysters, as well as farmed turbot. But best of all is the region's freshwater fish, including pike-perch, shad, tench, eels and lampreys.



Young carrots



A selection of the superb vegetables grown in the Loire Valley

LOCAL DISHES AND SPECIALITIES

Meals often start with a terrine or *pâté*, spread thickly on crusty bread. Creamy vegetable soups, such as asparagus or pumpkin, are also popular, as are grilled sardines and shellfish along the coast. Main courses include fish baked in a salt crust or simply poached and served with a creamy *beurre blanc* sauce. Superb poultry may also be on offer, roasted or prepared as a fricassée with cream and butter. The region produces excellent beef and lamb: tender *gigot*

Ste-Maure cheese

de sept heures is a menu favourite. Game dominates the winter table in the Sologne, commonly served with the wild mushrooms that flourish in the area. Many desserts are based on fruit, often baked in a tart or poached in wine.



Gigot de Sept Heures A leg of lamb is cooked slowly until tender with carrots, bacon, garlic, herbs and wine.



A cheese stall in the market at Loches in the Touraine

CHEESE

The Touraine and Berry produce some of France's finest goats' cheeses. The creamy, ash-covered Ste-Maure de Touraine is available both freshly made or matured in damp cellars. Selles-sur-Cher is a mild, flat, rounded, cindered cheese. Valençay, shaped into an ash-covered pyramid, is firmer with a stronger taste, and Pouligny-St-Pierre, a narrower pyramid, is mottled and blueish outside and white within. Most strongly flavoured are the small round Crottin de Chavignol cheeses.

Cows' milk cheeses of note include Feuille de Dreux, a flat, soft cheese with a chestnut leaf on the top, ash-covered Olivet and the washed-rinded Port-Salut.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Thanks to the mild climate, winter vegetables thrive in the Nantes area. Much of France's salad vegetables are grown here, as well as, peas, radishes, turnips, early leeks and carrots. In damp caves



A busy vegetable stall in the daily market at Saumur

along the banks of the Loire, tiny button mushrooms are cultivated. Samphire is gathered from the salt marshes near Nantes, and the Ile de Noirmoutier is famous for its new potatoes. The Sologne produces fine asparagus and lentils are grown in the Berry.

Orchards north of Tours and in the Sarthe are noted for their apples and pears; Comice pears originated near Angers. Other quality fruit includes the succulent plums of the Touraine and sweet strawberries from Saumur.

ON THE MENU

Alose à l'oseille Shad in a sorrel hollandaise sauce

Canard nantais Roast duck with Muscadet wine sauce

Civet de marcassin Hearty casserole of wild boar.

Géline à la lochoise Géline hen in a cream sauce

Porc aux pruneaux Pork fillets cooked with prunes in a wine and cream sauce

Potage d'asperges Creamy puréed asparagus soup

Prunes au Vouvray Plums stewed in Vouvray wine

Ragoût d'anguilles et cuisses de grenouille A stew of eel and frogs' legs

Tarte aux rillettes Open savoury tart with a filling of potted pork, eggs and cream



Lapin Chasseur Rabbit is simmered with tomato and mushrooms to make this traditional bunters' stew.



Sandre au beurre blanc A poached pike-perch is served with a beurre blanc sauce of butter, cream and shallots.



Tarte Tatin This upside-down tart of caramelized apples on a puff pastry base may be offered plain or with cream.

What to Drink in the Loire

The Loire Valley is a wine region (see pp30–31), so naturally the traditional tippie in cafés and bars is *un petit coup de rouge* or *un petit coup de blanc* (a small glass of red or white wine). The light rosés, such as Rosé d'Anjou or Rosé de Touraine, are drunk chilled, either in the afternoon with a slice of cake or as an apéritif. In November, bars and cafés serve *bernache*, the greenish, fermented juice left after the grapes have been pressed for winemaking. There is also a wide variety of other alcoholic drinks, including *eaux de vie* made with local fruits and light, lager-style beers, as well as non-alcoholic drinks such as coffees, teas and juices.



A waiter in a Loire Valley bar



White Sancerre



Red Bourgueil



Sparkling wine

Vin de Table, *Vin de Pays*, *Vin Délimité de Qualité Supérieure* (VDQS) and finally *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC). *Vin de Table* wines are rarely found in good restaurants. If in doubt, order the house wine (*la réserve*). Very few restaurants will risk their reputation on an inferior house wine, and they often provide good value for money.

APÉRITIFS AND DIGESTIFS

A glass of locally-produced sparkling wine can be an excellent apéritif or a pleasant accompaniment to the dessert course. Slightly sparkling Vouvray *pétillant* is popular, and further west in Anjou you will find Saumur *champenoise*, made by the *méthode champenoise*. Keep an eye open, too, for Crémant de Loire, another local sparkling wine.

A *kir* – white wine with a touch of *crème de cassis*, a blackcurrant liqueur – is a

WINE

Wine usually accompanies meals in the Loire, as it does throughout France. Local wine is often served in carafes. Ordering a *demi* (50 cl, approximately ½ pint) or

quart (25 cl) is an inexpensive way to try out a wide variety of the wines of the region before buying any to take home (see pp30–31).

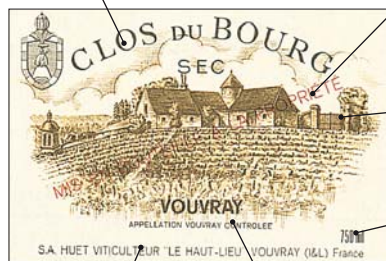
French law divides domestic wines into four classes, in ascending order of quality:

HOW TO READ A WINE LABEL

Even the simplest label will provide a key to the wine's flavour and quality. It will bear the name of the wine and its producer, its vintage if there is one, and whether it comes from a strictly defined area (*appellation contrôlée* or VDQS) or is a more general *vin de pays* or *vin de table*. It may also have a regional grading. The shape and colour of the bottle is also a guide. Most good-quality wine is bottled in green glass, which helps to protect it from light. The label's design may be appealing, but does not indicate quality.

The property or producer

Estate-bottled, rather than a blend from a merchant or growers' co-operative



Pictures may be accurate or fanciful

Capacity of the bottle

The address of the vineyard

The wine's *appellation contrôlée*

popular Burgundian apéritif, and an appealing variation, often served as the house apéritif, combines sparkling wine with raspberry or peach liqueur. Bars, cafés and restaurants also stock the usual range of French apéritifs as well as international gins, sheries, ports and whiskies.

After dinner, a little glass of clear fruit brandy made from local raspberries, pears or plums (*eaux de vie de framboise, de poire, de prune*) is a delicious aid to digestion. Other traditional French *digestifs*, such as cognac or calvados, are also drunk after meals in the region.

BEER

The locals drink mostly lager-style draught beer in cafés – ask for *un demi*. A range of bottled beers can also be found, both French (which is considerably cheaper) and imported.



Café crème, often served at breakfast with a fresh croissant

COFFEE AND TEA

Cafes, still the main focus of community life, serve good strong *express* (a tiny cup of black coffee). White coffees are prepared with hot milk and come in two sizes: small (*petit crème*) and large (*grand crème*). Together with fresh croissants, they make a good breakfast.

Tea served in cafés is often of the teabag variety (with a slice of lemon, it is *un thé citron*). Tearooms in towns, however, are more likely to use tea leaves. Many cafés also offer a range of exotic fruit and herb teas, which are caffeine-free. In restaurants an infusion of limeflower leaves (*tilleul*), mint (*menthe*) or camomile (*camomille*) is often drunk after dinner as an aid to digestion.

OTHER DRINKS

Children enjoy the colourful drinks served in tall glasses known as *menthe à l'eau* (green, minty syrup with tap water) and *grenadine* (a red fruit syrup), but these may be too sweet for adult tastes. Served with Vittel mineral water, for example, they become *Vittel menthe*, *Vittel grenadine*, and so on. *Vittel citron amer* (with bottled, still bitter lemon) is more refreshing than *Vittel citron* (with lemon syrup). Best of all for quenching the thirst – but also more expensive – is a *citron pressé*: freshly-squeezed lemon juice served with a carafe of water and packets of sugar to mix to taste. *Orange pressée* is orange juice served in the same way. Bottled fruit juices (*jus de fruits*) are also available everywhere. Tap water is safe to drink, but many people prefer mineral water (*eau minérale*), either sparkling (*gazeuse*) or still (*non-gazeuse*).



A wood-paneled hotel bar in Touraine



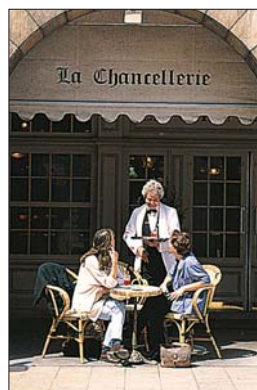
Locally-made apple juice

many new-style wine bars, often with high-tech decor, serve wine by the glass, with light meals, plates of *charcuterie* or cheeses with crusty bread. Traditional *salons de thé* (tea-rooms), which serve coffee, tea and hot chocolate, are mainly frequented by women. They also serve *pâtisseries* and chocolates, which can be bought to take away. The newer version offers light lunches and less sophisticated sweets, cakes and tarts to a younger, mixed clientele.

WHERE TO DRINK

Cafes are the traditional place to pop in for a coffee or beer, to meet a friend or watch the world go by. City centres have bustling cafés on every corner, and many squares are crowded with outdoor tables when the weather is fine. However, the traditional café, with its long bar counter lined by regulars, is gradually being superseded, at least in towns, by more elaborate places.

Bars and *bars à vin* (old-style wine bars) are often the haunts of more hardened drinkers and of late-night revellers, although hotel bars can attract a more eclectic clientele. In larger towns,



People enjoying a break in a stylish café in Orléans

Choosing a Restaurant

The restaurants in this section have been selected across a wide price range for their excellent food, good value and interesting location. Most restaurants in the Loire Valley offer set menus which may work out cheaper than the price category. For *Flavours of The Loire Valley* see pp210–11. For map references see inside back cover.

PRICE CATEGORIES

The following price ranges are for a three course meal for one, including a half-bottle of house wine, tax and service:

- € Under 30 euros
- €€ 30–45 euros
- €€€ 45–65 euros
- €€€€ 65–80 euros
- €€€€€ Over 80 euros

ANJOU

ANGERS La Ferme



2 Place Freppel, 49000 **Tel** 02 41 87 09 90

Map C3

This hectic restaurant near the cathedral spills out on to the shady terrace in summer. Souvenirs of bygone farming days hang on the walls of the rustic dining room, where copious portions of traditional, homely dishes like *poulé au pot* (chicken cooked in a pot), *coq au vin* and cassoulet are served. For dessert, try the giant profiteroles.

BÉHUARD Les Tonnelles



12 Rue du Chevalier-Bruhard, 49028 **Tel** 02 41 72 21 50

Map C3

Located just 13 km (eight miles) southeast of Angers, on the picturesque Île de Béhuard, this restaurant offers elegant contemporary décor and a relaxed friendly ambience. The menu is limited but well chosen. The produce is carefully selected from local, mainly organic producers, and there is a good range of Loire wines.

BOUCHEMAINE La Terrasse



La Pointe de Bouchemaine, 49080 **Tel** 02 41 77 14 46

Map C3

Located in a hamlet on the confluence of the rivers Loire and Maine, this restaurant has a stunning panoramic view. The menu features freshly caught eels, pikeperch, salmon and other freshwater fish. Classic dishes, such as *sandre au beurre blanc* (pikeperch in butter), are excellently prepared. Ironically, there is no terrace, so no alfresco dining.

BRIOLLAY Château de Noirieux



26 Route du Moulin, 49125 **Tel** 02 41 42 50 05

Map C3

This elegant Michelin-starred hotel-restaurant is located in a splendid château set in grounds overlooking the River Loire. The owner-chef prepares flawless classic dishes, such as sole with morel mushrooms and Racan pigeon pot-roasted with local wine. The exclusivity of the setting is worth the expense. The wine list is extensive.

DOUÉ-LA-FONTAINE Auberge de la Bienvenue



104 Route de Cholet, 49700 **Tel** 02 41 59 22 44

Map C3

A pretty inn situated in this town of roses. The menu offers elaborate savoury preparations, such as langoustines in saffron sauce, or calf's liver in port and pepper sauce. Other dishes revolve around local products, including pikeperch, crayfish, lamb and wild mushrooms.

FONTEVRAUD-L'ABBAYE La Licorne



Allée Ste-Catherine, 49590 **Tel** 02 41 51 72 49

Map C3

Next to the splendid abbey, this popular restaurant has a pretty courtyard terrace and elegant Louis IV dining room. The menu includes creations such as prawns and basil ravioli in morel sauce and, for dessert, warm chocolate soufflé or pears poached in red wine. Good selection of Saumur wines. Book ahead.

GENNES Auberge du Moulin de Sarré



Route de Louerre, 49350 **Tel** 02 41 51 81 32

Map C3

After taking a tour of the 16th-century watermill (the only working one in the region), try either the menu of *fouées* (warm bread puffs made from flour ground at the mill) with fillings such as goat's cheese or *rillettes* (duck pâté), or the fresh trout (fished on the spot). Reservations are required.

MONTSOEAU Diane de Méridor



12 Quai Philippe de Commines, 49730 **Tel** 02 41 51 71 76

Map C3

While dining at Diane de Méridor, you have a view of the château, which was the setting for the celluloid interpretation of *La Dame de Montsoreau* by Alexandre Dumas. Carved out of tufa rock, this restaurant is classic-modern, with exposed beams and an open fireplace. It specializes in freshwater fish dishes cooked to perfection.

SAUMUR Auberge St Pierre



6 Place St Pierre, 49400 **Tel** 02 41 51 26 25

Map C3

On a square near the château, in a former 15th-century monastery, this convivial restaurant serves regional specialities prepared with care. Dishes include pikeperch fillet and chicken cooked in Loire wine. Finish your meal with a plate of regional cheeses accompanied by a glass of fruity red wine, such as St Nicolas de Bourgueil.

THOUARCÉ Le Relais de BonnezeauxRoute Angers, 49380 **Tel** 02 41 54 08 33**Map** C3

This large, pleasant dining room is located in a converted railway station overlooking the vineyards – this is sweet-wine country. Imaginative cuisine is created with regional produce in dishes such as eels cooked in Coteaux du Layon, and calf sweetbreads braised in Savennières.

TOURAINÉ**AMBOISE Le Choiseul**36 Quai C Guinot, 37400 **Tel** 02 47 30 45 45**Map** D3

The Michelin-starred Choiseul is an elegant 18th-century mansion with a pretty garden and views of the Loire from the airy dining room. The sophisticated menu changes seasonally; in spring, a meal might include asparagus; in summer, roast pikeperch with mustard, or cassoulet of crayfish. Good Touraine wines and many other regional wines.

BOURGUEIL Le Moulin Bleu7 Rue du Moulin-Bleu, 37140 **Tel** 02 47 97 73 13**Map** D3

The house at the foot of this pretty blue mill has two vaulted dining rooms where traditional dishes are served in a friendly, convivial atmosphere. The cuisine remains faithful to the region, with Touraine-reared veal served with a Vouvray butter sauce. There are several good Bourgueil producers on the wine list.

CHINON Les Années 3078 Rue Voltaire, 37500 **Tel** 02 47 93 37 18**Map** D3

The chef at this elegant little eatery on the way up to the château has brought back a spark to the menu. Stéphane Charles presents dishes such as a *tartare* of oysters with a seaweed tempura, and pikeperch served with leeks and red peppers flavoured with ginger. Good local wines feature on the list.

FONDETTES Auberge de Port VallièresRoute de Langeais, 37230 **Tel** 02 47 42 24 04**Map** D3

On the banks of the River Loire, this former fisherman's pub has heaps of rustic charm. Regional dishes, such as beef cooked in Chinon wine and local freshwater fish, are prepared by chef Bruno Leroux. There is also a good choice of local wines.

MONTBAZON La Chancelière Jeu de Cartes1 Place des Marronniers, 37250 **Tel** 02 47 26 00 67**Map** D3

Modern, sophisticated cuisine prepared with precision and skill is on offer at La Chancelière. This restaurant proposes savoury but uncomplicated dishes such as oyster ravioli with a champagne sauce, or pan-fried escalope of foie gras. The well-selected wine list features good Vouvray and Bourgueil producers.

ONZAIN Domaine des Hauts de LoireRoute de Herbault, 41150 **Tel** 02 54 20 72 57**Map** D3

Haute cuisine is served in this former hunting lodge set within its own park, where superb dishes are presented by chef Rémi Giraud. Among the specialties are scallop *carpaccio* (raw, thin slices), beef poached in Montlouis wine with foie gras ravioli, and roast mango with passion-fruit jelly. The restaurant has one Michelin star. Classic wine list.

ROCHECORBON Les Hautes Roches86 Quai de la Loire, 37210 **Tel** 02 47 52 88 88**Map** D3

The dining room in this château is decorated in contemporary tones, and the chef serves modern, Michelin-starred cuisine to match, including irresistible dishes, such as a terrine of *lapin*, Racan pigeon with lemon confit, and Grand Manier soufflé. The cellar has wonderful wines from the best local producers.

SACHÉ Auberge du XII^e Siècle1 Rue du Château, 37190 **Tel** 02 47 26 88 77**Map** D3

In a historic building, a stone's throw from the Balzac Museum, is Auberge du XII^e Siècle. The main dining room has a rustic atmosphere with exposed beams. There is a good choice of fixed-price menus with classic dishes, such as snail Parmentier, roasted bass with purée of artichokes and foie gras, and chocolate tart with cherry coulis.

SALBRIS Domaine de ValaudranRue de Romorantin, 41300 **Tel** 02 54 97 20 00**Map** E3

Salbris is reputed to be the best place in Sologne to hunt. In season, this restaurant in an 18th-century country house benefits from superb game, which finds its way in dishes such as stuffed pigeon breast with apple sauce. Other fine dishes include bass wrapped in cabbage with a citrus sauce, or scorpion fish with mushrooms, shallots and foie gras.

ST-OUEN LES VIGNES L'Aubinière29 Rue Jules Gautier, 37530 **Tel** 02 47 30 15 29**Map** D3

North of Amboise, this small rustic restaurant opens on to a pretty garden that leads down to the river. Enjoy the creations of chef Jacques Arrayet, who serves outstanding dishes including foie gras and lobster, a caramel of beetroot with pistachio oil, and steamed bass with herbs and Paimpol beans.

TOURS L'Arche de Meslay14 Rue des Ailes in Parçay Meslay, 37210 **Tel** 02 47 29 00 07**Map D3**

Worth the nine-kilometre (six-mile) detour from the city centre, this refined, contemporary restaurant has a kitchen in full view. Watch the chef prepare a delicious lobster salad with chipped vegetables, *bouillabaisse tourangelle* (a regional fish stew) or bass with Indian spices.

TOURS L'Atelier Gourmand37 Rue Etienne Marcel, 37000 **Tel** 02 47 38 59 87**Map D3**

A charming small restaurant in a 15th-century building in the old part of Tours. Fabrice Bironneau presents a competitively priced, interesting menu. Seasonal dishes include goat's cheese and red pepper flan, veal sautéed with garlic and black olives, and fondant of chocolate. Warm, homely ambience.

TOURS Jean Bardet57 Rue Groison, 37000 **Tel** 02 47 41 41 11**Map D3**

In a Napoleon III mansion house with an opulent dining room, this gastronomic temple of the Loire serves inspired dishes, including tomato *tartare* with coriander, roast pigeon with stuffed apricots, and hot kirsch soufflé with chartreuse sorbet. Jean Bardet is renowned for its great wine list.

VEIGNÉ Moulin FleuriRoute de Ripault, 37250 **Tel** 02 47 26 01 12**Map D3**

Classic cuisine is beautifully presented by chef Alain Chaplin in an ancient watermill on the banks of the River Indre. The menu focuses on local ingredients such as Racan pigeon, *rillettes de Tours*, *andouillette* (chitterling sausage), goat's cheese and Richelieu truffles. There is also a decent children's menu.

VILLANDRY Domaine de la GiraudièreRoute de Druye, 37510 **Tel** 02 47 50 08 60**Map D3**

There are three dining rooms with original features in this 17th-century farmhouse near the château. Domaine de la Giraudière is a working farm of mainly goats, a fact that is reflected in the menu – goat's cheese marinated in herbs, kid goat, and goat's milk fromage for dessert. Home-produced pâtés, charcuterie and tarts.

VOUVRAY La Cave Martin66 Vallée Coquette, 37210 **Tel** 02 47 52 62 18**Map D3**

In this famous wine village, this restaurant carved into the tufa rock has a rustic menu with *andouillettes* (chitterling sausages), duck breast and confit, and a decent choice of salads. Start with a glass of local fizzy wine, and finish with an unctuous sweet Vouvray to accompany your dessert. Book ahead.

BLÉSOIS AND ORLÉANAIS**BEAUGENCY Le P'tit Bateau**54 Rue du Pont, 45190 **Tel** 02 38 44 56 38**Map E3**

Near the château, Le P'tit Bateau is the most appealing restaurant in town. Popular with locals, it offers traditional cuisine in a rustic dining room with exposed beams and open fireplace. Fresh fish, game (in season) and wild mushrooms all feature on the menu. There is a courtyard terrace for alfresco dining on sunny days.

BLOIS L'Orangerie du Château1 Avenue Jean Laigret, 41000 **Tel** 02 54 78 05 36**Map E3**

Housed in the 15th-century château's former winter garden, L'Orangerie has a fine setting, which is matched by the outstanding food and wine. The menu features traditional regional favourites, such as roast pikeperch and white asparagus from the Sologne. The dependable wine list includes good Touraine producers.

BLOIS Au Rendez-Vous des Pêcheurs27 Rue du Foix, 41000 **Tel** 02 54 74 67 48**Map E3**

This restaurant is famed throughout the region for its menu, which focuses on Loire fish and seafood creations, including pike stuffed with chestnuts, and bream with prawns. There is also Sologne game (in season) and a good selection of wines from the Loire Valley. Book ahead.

BRACIEUX Le Relais de Bracieux1 Ave de Chambord, 41250 **Tel** 02 54 46 41 22**Map E3**

After visiting nearby Chambord and the Cheverny vineyards, take a break at this gourmet restaurant in a former coaching inn. Enthusiastic chef Bernard Robin uses the best local products to create excellent dishes, such as terrine of Loire shad and eels with artichoke salad and creamy sorrel sauce.

CONTRES La Botte d'Asperges52 Rue Henri Mauger, 41700 **Tel** 02 54 79 50 49**Map E3**

Locally grown asparagus features prominently on the menu (in season). Behind the rustic atmosphere is an inspirational chef who prepares such delights as sautéed monkfish infused with vanilla, rabbit with buttered gingerbread, and peanut profiteroles with chocolate sauce. Small, well-chosen wine list. You can also take food away.

GIEN Restaurant la Poularde13 Quai de Nice, 45500 **Tel** 02 38 67 36 05**Map** F3

This classic restaurant on the banks of the Loire serves traditional cuisine in an elegantly furnished dining room, with Gien tableware. The menu includes succulent crispy langoustines, and local pikeperch cooked in Chinon wine with mushrooms. Game also appears on the menu in season.

LAMOTTE-BEUVRON Hôtel Tatin5 Avenue de Vierzon, 41600 **Tel** 02 54 88 00 03**Map** E3

This elegant hotel-restaurant serves traditional fare made with fresh local produce. The menu includes foie gras, salad of home-made pâté and warm goat's cheese, pikeperch, pigeon, steak and the famous *tarte Tatin* (which must be ordered in advance). There is a good selection of quality Sancerre and Chevrny wines.

ORLÉANS La Chancellerie27 Place du Martroi, 45000 **Tel** 02 38 53 57 54**Map** E2

This lively brasserie-restaurant is located on the town's main square. Built by order of the Duke of Orléans in 1754, the building was originally used to keep the carriages, and later it became the omnibus station. The interior has high ceilings, a marble bar, leather banquettes and brass trimmings. Staple fare is enlivened by good wines.

ORLÉANS Les Antiquaires2 Rue au Lin, 45000 **Tel** 02 38 53 63 48**Map** E2

Popular with locals for his inventive cuisine, well-known chef Philippe Bardau prepares contemporary dishes such as tart of semi-smoked aubergine, langoustine ravioli and red-fruit tapas with wild blackberry milkshake. The dining room is decorated in warm tones, and there is a good selection of wines.

ROMORANTIN-LANTHENAY Le Lion d'Or69 Rue Georges-Clemenceau, 41200 **Tel** 02 54 94 15 15**Map** E3

This hotel-restaurant is set in a beautiful Renaissance manor house. Classic cuisine is prepared by a talented chef, and the subtle, elegant dishes use the best local game, vegetables and fish according to what is in season. The service is precise and professional, and there is a good selection of wines from all regions.

SOUVIGNY-EN-SOLOGNE La Perdrix Rouge22 Rue du Gâtinais, 41600 **Tel** 02 54 88 41 05**Map** E3

A charming restaurant serving reliable cuisine using the best game and fish, such as superb pikeperch *au beurre blanc* (in a butter sauce), Sologne hare, veal sweetbread ragout and a *millefeuille* of asparagus with a shellfish coulis. The cellar holds a fine collection of wines at affordable prices.

BERRY**BANNEGON Auberge du Moulin de Chaméron**Le Village, 18210 **Tel** 02 48 61 84 48**Map** F4

This welcoming hotel-restaurant is located in a rustic, picturesque 18th-century watermill. The chef pays homage to local produce and prepares regional classics and savoury dishes, such as oxtail braised in Menetou wine. The Auberge also houses a small museum dedicated to flour-making and milling. Friendly ambience.

BOURGES Le Jacques Cœur3 Place Jacques Cœur, 18000 **Tel** 02 48 26 53 01**Map** F4

Facing the Palais Jacques Cœur, in front of the church, this restaurant offers excellent typical Berry cuisine. There are flavourful dishes, such as pikeperch in Sancerre wine, or classic *coq-au-vin*. The small, intimate dining areas are decorated in period style. Municipal parking is available nearby.

CHÂTEAUMEILLANT Le Piet à Terre21 Rue du Château, 18370 **Tel** 02 48 61 41 74**Map** F4

Creative dishes are served in this delightful restaurant situated at the edge of the vineyards. In the modern dining room, try inventive dishes such as red mullet with dried fruit and pistachio chutney, or pigeon cooked over a bed of hay, or any of the delicious desserts. The wine list focuses on local Sancerre and Loire Valley producers.

CHÂTEAUROUX Le Bistro Gourmand10 Rue du Marché, 36000 **Tel** 02 54 07 86 98**Map** D4

Only a step away from the market place is this busy bistro with a charming patio at the rear. The menus follow the seasons using locally sourced produce. In the convivial atmosphere diners can enjoy the quality of the foie gras and rib beef skilfully prepared by the chef. Wines are available by the glass, or you can bring your own bottle.

LE PETIT PRESSIGNY Restaurant Dallais – La Promenade11 Rue du Savoureux, 37350 **Tel** 02 47 94 93 52**Map** D4

Located in the village centre, the Michelin-starred Dallais has a striking contemporary décor in the dining room. The cuisine is exceptional. Delicately prepared savoury dishes include roast morel mushrooms, foie gras and local green asparagus. The sommelier gives good advice on the wide selection of wines on offer.

NOHANT Auberge de la Petite FadettePlace du Château Nohant, 36400 **Tel** 02 54 31 01 48**Map E4**

Named after the heroine in one of George Sand's novels, this family-run inn has a Renaissance-style dining room with a medieval fireplace. It is rustic and cosy in winter, with a delightful airy terrace in the heat of the summer. Try the speciality of the Berry region, *poulet en barbouille*, a variation on *coq-au-vin*. Good selection of Loire wines.

SANCERRE Auberge la Pomme d'OrPlace de la Mairie, 18300 **Tel** 02 48 54 13 30**Map F3**

This small restaurant in a former coaching inn serves classic dishes created with seasonal produce from the region. Enjoy the simplicity of the Chavignol goat's cheese, pikeperch, Sologne pigeon in honey, or shredded duck with raspberry vinegar.

VIGNOUX SUR BARANGEON Le Prieuré2 Rue Jean-Graczyk, 18500 **Tel** 02 48 51 58 80**Map E3**

Near to Vierzon, this lovely hotel-restaurant was built in 1862 to serve as the village presbytery. High-quality gourmet cuisine is served in the elegant dining room or on the covered terrace by the pool. Expect to find dishes such as roast pikeperch with Berry lentils and foie gras.

NORTH OF THE LOIRE**CHARTRES Le Grand Monarque**22 Place des Epars, 28000 **Tel** 02 37 18 15 15**Map E2**

Within this magnificent 17th-century staging post are both a gourmet Le Georges restaurant and a brasserie serving traditional food. The cuisine is ambitious and flavourful, with dishes such as red mullet and smoked Loire eel in vinaigrette, and sea bass cooked in a clay crust. Excellent desserts and a first-rate wine cellar complete the experience.

CHÂTEAUDUN Aux Trois Pastoureaux31 Rue André Gillet, 28200 **Tel** 02 37 45 74 40**Map E2**

The dining room of this well-established restaurant has warm tones; the walls are hung with paintings by a local artist. The chef's dishes combine classic produce and contemporary tastes. Try the melon accompanied by duck breast with foie gras, braised veal, and the chocolate and raspberry tart. Good choice of wines by the glass.

EVRON Relais du Gué de SelleRoute de Mayenne, 53600 **Tel** 02 43 91 20 00**Map C2**

Located in the heart of the Mayenne countryside, this restaurant, in a typical old farmhouse, serves regional classic dishes that retain a pleasant rusticity. Locally sourced ingredients, such as Ernée foie gras served with a gelée flavoured with sweet Layon wine, Loué chicken and Maine rib of beef are some of the specialities.

LAVAL Le Capucin Gourmand66 Rue Vauffleury, 53000 **Tel** 02 43 66 02 02**Map B2**

This centrally located restaurant has an ivy-clad façade, dining rooms with bright yellow walls and blue wicker furnishings, and a charming patio terrace for summer dining. The menu includes such refined modern dishes as the turbot with an infusion of vanilla pods and the pigeon pan-fried with pine kernels.

LE MANS Le Nez Rouge107 Grand-Rue, 72000 **Tel** 02 43 24 27 26**Map C2**

A charming timbered restaurant in the medieval part of Le Mans. The young chef has trained in some of the best restaurants in France, and his dishes are based on the freshest produce, such as lobster and veal sweetbreads. The dining room is cosy and intimate, and there is a terrace across the road. Book ahead.

LE MANS Le Beaulieu3 Place des Iffs, 72000 **Tel** 02 43 87 78 37**Map C2**

Gastronomic cuisine is offered in this elegant restaurant in a 15th-century house in the Old Town. Among the appetizing dishes, made with the most noble produce, are veal sweetbreads with truffles, langoustines, lobster and caviar, foie gras and potatoes with truffles, and beef with truffles. Worth splashing out on for a treat.

MALICORNE-SUR-SARTHE La Petite Auberge5 Place Duguesclin, 72270 **Tel** 02 43 94 80 52**Map C3**

In summer, you can dine on the riverside terrace and watch the boats go by; in winter, take refuge around the magnificent medieval fireplace. Enjoy classic cuisine with an innovative twist, including delicious gratin of scallops with smoked salmon or perfectly cooked steak with a red Bourgueil wine sauce.

STE-GEMME-MORONVAL L'EscapadePlace du Docteur-Jouve, 28500 **Tel** 02 37 43 72 05**Map E1**

This auberge-restaurant in the heart of the Dreux countryside has a welcoming atmosphere and a smartly furnished dining room. On the menu, classic dishes that respect seasonal produce, such as braised veal, asparagus and grolles mushrooms. There is a pleasant terrace for outside dining.

SANDARVILLE Auberge de Sandarville14 Rue de la Sente-aux-Prêtres, 28120 **Tel** 02 37 25 33 18**Map** E2

This lovely old farmhouse houses three characterful dining rooms, with exposed beams and open fireplaces. All this creates a friendly, homely atmosphere to enjoy classics such as seafood salad, *sandre* (pikeperch) in Chinon wine, turbot hollandaise and veal with morel mushrooms. Lovely flower-filled terrace for alfresco dining.

LOIRE-ATLANTIQUE AND THE VENDÉE**CHALLANS Chez Charles**8 Place du Champ de Foire, 85300 **Tel** 02 51 93 36 65**Map** A4

At this attractive family-run restaurant with a bistro ambience, the chef carefully selects the produce, respecting the seasons. The menu includes regional dishes such as fricassee of eels, hake from Île d'Yeu and Challandais duck, and classics such as beef with Noirmoutier potatoes. Local producers feature on the wine list.

CLISSON La Bonne Auberge1 Rue Olivier de Clisson, 44190 **Tel** 02 40 54 01 90**Map** B4

This comfortable auberge in the city centre has three attractive dining rooms, including one set in a conservatory with garden views. The specialities include pan-fried foie gras, sea bass with truffle-flavoured potatoes, and tart of ceps and scallops. The desserts are delicate, and the Muscadet is good.

LA ROCHE SUR YON Le Rivoli20 Boulevard Aristide-Briand, 85000 **Tel** 02 51 37 43 41**Map** B4

Located in the heart of the Vendée, this restaurant overflows with originality. The decor comprises zebra-striped upholstery and tablecloths with psychedelic motifs, while the cuisine includes *tartare* of fish with coriander, venison in red wine, and a delicious strawberry crumble. The wine list is simple but well chosen.

LES SABLES D'OLONNE La Pilotine7 Promenade Georges Clemenceau, 85100 **Tel** 02 51 22 25 25**Map** A4

At this stylish little restaurant facing the town hall, the menu is based around the catch of the day. The chef prepares inventive fish and shellfish dishes, such as casserole of lobster and Noirmoutier potatoes, or salad of langoustines with asparagus and marinated foie gras "chips". Be sure to book ahead.

NANTES Le Pressoir11 Quai Turenne, 44000 **Tel** 02 40 35 31 10**Map** B3

More than a simple bistro, this restaurant is located on the quays. The young chef presents interesting dishes such as *carpaccio de grison* (thin slices of cured beef), roast bass, scallops with pig's feet, *tartare* of tuna, and steak with morel mushrooms. The wine list is extensive, with many offerings by the glass. Book ahead.

NANTES La Cigale4 Place Graslin, 44000 **Tel** 02 51 84 94 94**Map** B3

This ornate Belle Epoque brasserie dates from 1895, when it was frequented by celebrated writers and the Nantes elite. The quality of the cuisine matches the exceptional interior. Oysters, *carpaccio* (thin, quasi-raw slices) of salmon and beef à la *plancha* (cooked on a hot plate) are among the dishes to try. Extensive wine list. Open all day.

NANTES Les Temps Changent1 Place Aristide-Briand, 44000 **Tel** 02 51 72 18 01**Map** B3

This welcoming venue provides quality French dishes that combine classic produce and inventive cooking. The menu includes roast langoustines with kumquat, Parmesan and basil, and *chaud-froid* of mullet. Interesting wine list and a big terrace.

NANTES L'Atlantide16 Quai Ernest-Renaud, 44100 **Tel** 02 40 73 23 23**Map** B3

Simply the best place in town to eat, with a dining room on the fourth floor that offers a superb view. Exotic, innovative cuisine is served up by the well-travelled chef, whose menu includes ray with mango and avocado, and red tuna with a bergamot sauce. Remarkable wine list.

PORNIC Entre Vins et Marées70 Quai Leray, 44210 **Tel** 02 40 82 51 25**Map** A3

This friendly bistro located on the quay of this fishing port serves wonderfully fresh fish and seafood dishes at very reasonable prices. The menu remains faithful to Brittany. Try the warm cockles, the *prat ar coum* (oyster dish), or cod with chitterling sausage. The selections of wines is remarkable, and there are some interesting choices.

ST-JOACHIM La Mare aux Oiseaux162 Île de Fédrun, 44720 **Tel** 02 40 88 53 01**Map** A3

Attractive auberge in the centre of the Marais de Brière. The spontaneous and imaginative cuisine uses the best from the marshlands – pigeon, eel, duck, frog and wild mint – and from the nearby sea – sardines, crab and edible seaweed. The specialities include pigeon and frogs' legs in mint sauce.

SHOPS AND MARKETS

Shopping for specialities of the Loire Valley is always a pleasure, and the region's towns and cities also offer many opportunities to purchase the goods that France is famous for – fashion accessories and clothes, kitchenware, porcelain and crystal, and particularly food. Specialist shops are everywhere, and



visiting the region's open-air and indoor food markets gives the visitor a wonderful opportunity to buy a vast range of local produce and culinary specialities. This section provides guidelines on shopping in the Loire Valley, and pages 222–3 show some of the best regional foods, wines and other specialist goods available.



Chocolates on display in La Livre Tournois, a *confiserie* in Tours

OPENING HOURS

Small food shops in the Loire region open early – around 7:30 or 8am – and close at around 12:30 for lunch, then reopen at about 3:30 or 4pm until 7 or 8pm. Other small shops are open from roughly 2 to 6:30 or 7pm on Mondays (many remain closed all day), 9am to noon and 2 to 6:30 or 7pm, Tuesday to Saturday. Small supermarkets generally take a long lunch break, but department stores and large supermarkets do not close for lunch. Sales are usually held in late-June and January.

Open-air food markets take place one, two or three mornings a week, often including Sundays, while the large indoor food markets (*les halles*) are usually open from Tuesday to Saturday for the same hours as small food shops. This guide lists the market days for each town featured.

SPECIALIST SHOPS

Despite the mushrooming of supermarkets and large superstores, small specialist shops have continued to

thrive in France, and they add enormously to the pleasure of shopping trips. Food shops in particular often specialize in a single theme. *Boulangeries* sell fresh bread, but they may be *boulangeries-pâtisseries*, which means that tempting cakes and pastries will also be on offer. *Traiteurs* sell prepared dishes, while *épiceries* are small grocers. *Crémeries* specialize in dairy products, *fromageries* sell only cheese and *charcuteries* specialize in cooked and cured meats with a few prepared, cold dishes. An *épicerie fine* focuses on high-class groceries and is a good source of gifts to take home, such as local mustards or vinegars in attractive jars or bottles.

An *alimentation générale* (general food store) may have a self-service system. In small villages, this is sometimes the only shop, although fresh bread will always be available either there or from the local café. A travelling van also supplies fresh bread in some regions.

Cleaning products are bought in a *droguerie*, hardware from a *quincaillerie*, books from a *librairie* and stationery (much of which is particularly stylish in France) from a *papeterie*.

The area has some specialist shops that focus on a single product, such as umbrellas or walking sticks, chess sets or stamps, or in a single field such as militaria or natural history books. Their owners are usually extremely knowledgeable about their particular subject, and they enjoy sharing it if you show an interest. Antique shops (*magasins d'antiquités*) tend to be very pricey. Head instead for a *brocante* (bric-à-brac shop), or try hunting for bargains in local flea markets.

TASTING AND BUYING WINE

The Loire Valley is famous for its wines and the region is scattered with producers.

Signs beside the road saying “*dégustation*” mean that a “tasting” is held in the vineyard. It is important to remember that the local *vigneron* will expect a modest purchase of a few bottles after you have drunk several experimental glasses. However, in Saumur it is possible to tour the *chais* (the wine growers' own cellars) with the minimum of sales pressure. Best of all, visit the *Maisons du Vin* in most major towns, where the literature, information and often free tastings are very helpful and interesting.



Sign for a *charcuterie*

HYPERMARKETS AND CHAIN STORES

Superstores and the larger hypermarkets (*hyper-marchés*) are usually situated on the outskirts of towns, often as part of a *centre commercial* (shopping complex) that may also include small boutiques, a DIY outlet and a petrol station. Many of these big stores belong to the Auchan, Carrefour or Continent chains.

The old-style *grand magasin*, or department store, found in the region's towns has generally either been converted into a series of boutiques or taken over and modernized by the up-market *Nouvelles Galeries* or *Printemps* national chains. These chic stores are good for clothes, accessories and perfumes. The popular *Monoprix* and *Prisunic* stores are worth visiting if you are looking for inexpensive stationery, lingerie and cosmetics. Many of them also have a reasonably priced food department.



A flower-seller and customer at the village market in Luynes

MARKETS

Open-air food markets are one of the delights of the Loire Valley. Their offerings are mouth-watering: mounds of succulent vegetables, *charcuterie* specialities, goats' cheeses and plump poultry and game. Of this excellent fare, most is produced locally, often in small-scale market gardens owned and worked by the stall-holder. Produce that has



Local goats' cheese for sale in Amboise market



Fresh local produce on sale in the market in Saumur's place St-Pierre

been grown locally is labelled *pays*. Look out for unusual specialities, such as the strangely-shaped squashes and pumpkins that appear in autumn, wild mushrooms and flavoured honeys. Honey stalls often sell honey-flavoured confectionery and honey soap, too. Spice and herb stalls are also interesting, providing a wealth of gift ideas. Some markets have stalls selling clothes or shoes and leather goods. Look out also for local craft work.

Flea markets (*marchés aux puces*) are regular events in many towns and are often held in small towns and villages in countryside districts during the summer holiday season.

VAT REBATES

Since the advent of the Single European Market, rebates of value-added tax (*taxe à la valeur ajoutée* or *TVA*) are only available to those not resident in a European Union country. They apply only to purchases totalling at least 175€ in a single shop, on the same day, and taken out of the EU

within three months. The export sales form you receive on purchase must be handed to the customs officer as you leave the EU.

Reimbursements usually go directly to your bank. Not all articles qualify for rebates. In stores frequented by foreign tourists, staff are familiar with the process.

DIRECTORY

REGIONAL SPECIALITIES

Angers

Pâtisserie La Petite Marquise

22 rue des Lices.

Tel 02 41 87 43 01.

www.quernon.com

Quernons d'Ardoise and sweets.

Bourges

La Maison des Forestines

3 pl Cujas.

Tel 02 48 24 00 24.

Forestines.

Guérande

La Maison du Sel

Pradel.

Tel 02 40 62 08 80.

Guérande salt.

Nantes

La Friande

12 rue Paul Bellamy.

Tel 02 40 20 14 68.

Nantaise biscuits.

Orléans

La Chocolaterie Royale

51 rue Royale.

Tel 02 38 53 93 43.

Tours

La Livre Tournois

6 rue Nationale.

Tel 02 47 05 42 00.

Pruneaux Fourrés and chocolates.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Gien

Faïencerie de Gien

78 Pl de la Victoire.

Tel 02 38 67 00 05.

www.gien.com

Porcelain.

Malicorne

Faïenceries d'Art

du Bourg-Joly

16 rue Carnot.

Tel 02 43 94 80 10.

Poncé-sur-le-Loir

Centre d'Artisanat d'Art

Moulin de Paillard.

Tel 02 43 44 45 31.

Craft workshops and shop.

Villaines-les-Rochers

Coopérative de Vannerie

de Villaines

1 rue de la Cheneillère.

Tel 02 47 45 43 03.

www.vannerie.com

Wickerwork studio and shop.

What to Buy in the Loire Valley

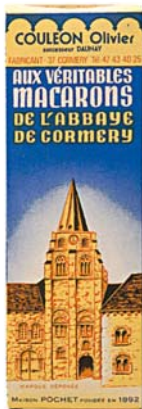
The best buys in the Loire tempt the eye as well as the stomach. A gourmet's paradise, the food shops and open-air markets of the region attract visitors with their delicious scents and sights. Local producers are justifiably proud of their goods and pack them with respect, in attractive crates or pottery jars. But gourmet treats are not the only local goods worth looking for. The region has long been famous for its china from Gien and for the fabric and lace of the Touraine, evocative of the remarkable history of the Loire.

CONFECTIONERY

Local confectionery specialities make good gifts to take home, especially when they are so prettily packaged. The region is well-known for its wide range of sweets, which are available from tearooms and specialist confectioners, and many towns also have their own mouth-watering treats.



Macaron biscuits from Cormery

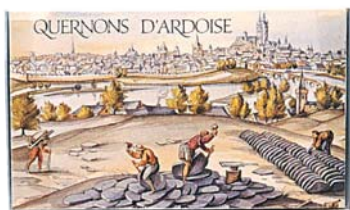


A beautifully wrapped package of sweets



Forestines from Bourges

Pruneaux fourrés, prunes stuffed with marzipan



Chocolates resembling traditional slate tiles



Fruit-flavoured sweets

SOUVENIRS

The châteaux and museums of the Loire Valley have well-stocked shops that sell an array of appealing souvenirs. In addition to the usual booklets and posters, many sell gifts with an historical theme, such as replica playing cards or tapestries. Wine bought direct from a local vineyard is another special souvenir (see pp30–31).



Playing cards with historical figures



Wine made at Chenonceau

THE FLAVOURS OF THE LOIRE

It is impossible to visit the Loire without being amazed by the abundance of delicious food. Much comes perfectly packaged for travelling. Near the game-filled forests of the Berry, you can buy jars and tins of pâtés and terrines. Goats' cheeses are moulded into a variety of shapes, and the firmer varieties travel successfully. Heather honey from Berry's heathland and wine vinegars from Orléans are also specialities of the region.



Poulain chocolate made in Blois



Confiture de vin, jelly made from wine



Pickled samphire



Crémant de Loire, sparkling wine



Goats' cheese



Cotignac, quince jelly from Orléans



Sea salt from Guérande



LOCAL CRAFTS

Traditional crafts survive throughout the Loire Valley, and you can often visit craftsmen and women at work in their studios. Many towns in the region have long been renowned for their craft specialities, such as Malicorne for its lattice-work faïence, Villaines-les-Rochers for its baskets or Gien for its china.



Wicker basket from Villaines



Pottery from La Borne in Berry



Gien china side plate



Dinner plate from Gien

ACTIVITIES IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

A holiday in the Loire Valley can combine the cultural highlights of visits to the spectacular châteaux with enjoyment of the region's wealth of natural environments. The gentle terrain and beautiful forests are perfect for exploration on foot, horseback or mountain bike, and the clear waters of the lakes and rivers –



not to mention the spectacular Atlantic coastline – are enticing spots for swimming or boating. Here is a selection of just a few of the activities on offer in the region. For more information contact the departmental Loisirs–Accueil offices (see p227), which focus on leisure activities, or the local tourist offices in towns and villages.

WALKING

The Loire Valley is renowned for its many accessible and scenic walks, which are called *Randonnées* (see pp28–9). Although these routes are generally clearly signposted, it is a good idea to carry a large-scale map or a Topo-Guide. These are only available in French but do contain maps, a description of the itinerary, details of sites of architectural or natural interest to be found along the route, an estimate of the time it will take you to complete the walk and the addresses of local hotels, restaurants, hostels and camp sites. Most Topo-Guides cost around 15€. A complete list is available from the **Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre**.

You will never be more than a day's walk away from a town or village where you will be able to find food and accommodation, so it is not necessary to carry a large amount of equipment, but, as always, you should wear

good, strong walking shoes. Remember that some paths can be damp and muddy during the spring and autumn.

CYCLING

The generally flat landscape of the Loire Valley makes it perfect for cyclists. Because many of the châteaux are so near to each other, it is easy to visit several by bicycle in only a few days. Mountain bike enthusiasts will enjoy riding the clearly signposted paths through the region's forests and nature reserves.

Motorways and a few other major roads are forbidden to cyclists, and these are clearly marked: the sign has a white background with a red border and a cyclist in the middle. Cycle lanes, when they exist, are compulsory. Bicycles must have two working brakes, a bell, a red rear reflector and yellow reflectors on the pedals, as well as a white front light and a red rear light after dark. It is also advisable to wear a helmet and to carry a few

essential spare parts in case of breakdown. While bicycle shops are common in the region, foreign spare parts may not be available.

It is possible to hire touring bicycles and mountain bikes throughout the region. Local tourist offices will be able to provide you with a list of cycle hire centres.

Transporting your bicycle on local trains is free in most cases, although on major train routes the SNCF requires you to register your bicycle and will levy a small charge. The booklet *Train et Vélo*, available at most train stations, gives more information on carrying bikes on trains.

Among a number of organized itineraries for cyclists, the most ambitious is *Loire à Vélo*, a 150-km (93-mile) trail tracking the River Loire from Angers to Tours. There are eight bike hire outlets along the route, with the possibility of one-way rentals. Hotels, camp sites and *chambres d'hôte* marked with the *Accueil Vélo* sign welcome cyclists and will forward luggage to the next stop if required. A handbook with maps and accommodation listings is available from local tourist offices or the Comité Régional du Tourisme Centre. The *Pays des Châteaux à Vélo* leaflet describes 11 circuits around Blois and Chambord.

The **Fédération Française de Cyclisme** is the umbrella organization for more than 2,800 cycling clubs in France. They are able to provide advice, local contacts and a number of cycling itineraries in the region if you write to them well in advance.



Cycling, one of the most pleasant ways to see the Loire Valley



A riverside pony trek in the beautiful Vendée region

HORSE RIDING AND PONY TREKKING

Horse lovers will enjoy a visit to the National Riding School in the important equestrian town of Saumur, where the world-famous Cadre Noir riding team perform in regular displays (see p83).

The forests of the Loire Valley, with their well-maintained networks of trails and well-marked bridle paths, are ideal for riding. Topo-Guides are as useful for riders as they are for walkers.

Experienced riders can hire horses by the hour, half-day or day from numerous stables in the region. A sign reading *Loueur d'Equidés* means that horses are for hire without an instructor. If you prefer to be accompanied when riding, you should search out an *Ecole d'Equitation* or a *Centre Equestre* (riding school).

Many stables also offer longer treks on horseback, called *randonnées*, which last between a weekend and a week. Small groups are accompanied on the trek by an experienced guide, and accommodation is usually in quite basic hotels or hostels, although some luxury tours are also available.

The rental of old-fashioned horse-drawn caravans is becoming increasingly popular in the Loire Valley. Travellers sleep in the carriage overnight and journey at a slow, leisurely pace during the day. Generally caravans come

in two sizes: the smaller one carries four adults or two adults and three children; the other carries six to eight people. There are also larger, open wagons, driven by a guide, that are used for group excursions of up to 15.

FISHING

The rivers of the Loire Valley are teeming with freshwater fish, including bream, bullhead, carp, grey mullet, perch, pike, roach, shad and zander. There are also trout in some of the faster-running tributaries of the Loire.

To fish in private waters, you must make arrangements with the owner. To fish in state-controlled waters, you must buy a permit, which is available from many tackle shops. Applicants must provide proof that they are a member of an angling association at home and pay a fishing tax.

There are two kinds of fishing tax: the basic tax covers fishing with worms in rivers that do not have trout runs; the special tax covers spinning, fly-fishing, and fish-bait fishing

in all rivers, including those with trout. You cannot fish more than half an hour before sunrise or after sunset. There are set seasons for certain fish and limits on their size.

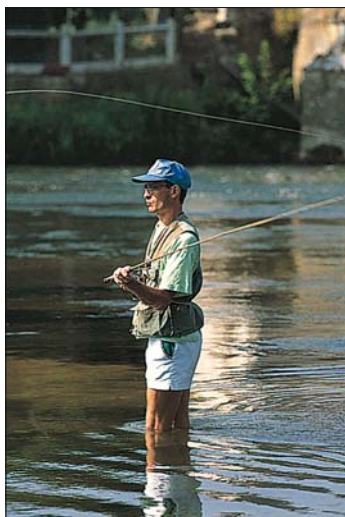
The **Union Nationale pour la Pêche en France**, which represents more than 4,000 local fishing associations, provides information

on the regulations regarding freshwater fishing and the starting dates of the different

fishing seasons in France. Ocean fishing is free from any tax as long as you do not use nets, although there are restrictions on the equipment a boat can carry.



Freshwater fish



Fly-fishing on the tranquil River Loir

GOLF

Evidence of the growing popularity of golf in France can be seen throughout the Loire Valley, which has many beautiful and challenging courses. Some of the region's golf courses, such as the Golf du Val de l'Indre, located near Châteauroux in Berry, and La Bretesche in Missillac in the Loire-Atlantique, are set in the grounds of châteaux.

In the Loiret, six courses around Orléans have joined up to provide a golf pass that combines greens fees for the different courses and the added option of accommodation in nearby two- or three-star hotels. For more information, contact the *Loiret Loisirs Accueil* office in Orléans, or the respective golf courses.

A similar deal is available in the Western Loire, where a golf pass allows unlimited access to any of the six participating courses. The basic pass is valid for two days; additional days can be purchased as required. Contact the Nantes tourist office (see p231) or participating golf courses for more information.

BOATING AND WATER SPORTS

Because the Loire Valley is criss-crossed with beautiful rivers, most visitors cannot resist the temptation to take at least one boat trip. A wide variety of short excursions

is available from riverside *ports de plaisance* (marinas) throughout the Loire region, and in general they do not require advance reservations.

The marshes of the Marais Poitevin (see pp182–5) are best viewed from its canal network in a *barque* (the traditional, flat-bottomed boat).

One option is to base your entire visit on the water by renting a houseboat or a cruiser for a period of a few days or for one or two weeks. Boats of different sizes and styles are

available, from old-fashioned canal boats to sophisticated modern cruisers. Most prices are for round trips and include bedding, kitchen equipment and full training, and it may also be possible to rent bicycles or canoes, or to make a one-way (*simple*) trip. Further information is available from the main tourist offices.

If you are looking for a more adventurous way of enjoying the region's rivers, try canoeing or kayaking. It is best to take a guided tour from one of the clubs based along the river. Although the river may look calm, there can be dangerous undercurrents and obstacles.



Kayaking on the River Mayenne

There are good activity centres beside many of the rivers and lakes in the Loire Valley, and there may also be facilities for renting pedaloes, canoes and yachts – some centres even offer water-skiing. A good number of the Atlantic coastal resorts also have facilities for renting windsurfers – Les Sables d'Olonne (see p181) was host to the world windsurfing championships in 1988.

Swimmers should stay in the approved areas. While the sand banks may look inviting, there are risks from strong currents and shifting sands. Further information on water safety is given on pages 234–5.



Windsurfing at La Tranche-sur-Mer on the Atlantic Coast

THE LOIRE FROM THE AIR

One of the most luxurious ways to see the Loire Valley is from a hot-air balloon (*montgolfière* in French). There are daily flights in the summer, weather permitting, from Tours, Nantes and Amboise. **France Montgolfières** will put together custom-made excursions.

You can also take a tour in a helicopter or light aircraft. In addition to major airports at Tours and Nantes, there are many other airfields throughout the region. The tourist offices provide complete information. Flying lessons are also available at some of these centres. Learning to fly in France can be much cheaper than elsewhere. Details can be obtained from the **Fédération Nationale Aéronautique**. Visitors interested in gliding or hang-gliding should contact the **Fédération Française de Vol Libre**.



Ballooning over Le Plessis-Bourré in Anjou

DIRECTORY

SERVICES LOISIRS ACCUEIL

Cher

5 rue de Séraucourt,
18014 Bourges.
Tel 02 48 48 00 18.

Eure-et-Loir

10 rue Docteur
Maunoury, 28000
Chartres.
Tel 02 37 84 01 01.

Indre

7 rue Bourdillon,
36003 Châteauroux.
Tel 02 54 27 70 49.

Indre-et-Loire

38 rue Augustin-Fresnel,
37171 Chambray-les-
Tours. **Tel 02 47 27 27 31.**

Loire-Atlantique

11 rue du Château de
l'Erable, 44306 Nantes.
Tel 02 51 72 95 31.

Loiret

8 rue d'Escures,
45041 Orléans.
Tel 02 38 62 04 88.

Mayenne

84 av Robert Buron,
53003 Laval.
Tel 02 43 53 58 81.

Sarthe

40 rue de Joinville,
72000 Le Mans.
Tel 02 43 40 22 60.

WALKING

Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre

14 rue Riquet, 75019
Paris. **Tel 01 44 89 93 93.**
www.ffrandonnee.fr

CYCLING

**Comité Régional du
Tourisme Centre**
37 av de Paris, 45000
Orléans. **Tel 02 38 79 95
28.** **www.loire-a-velo.fr**

Fédération Française de Cyclisme

Bâtiment Jean Monnet,
5 rue de Rome, 93561
Rosny-sous-Bois Cedex.
Tel 01 49 35 69 00.
www.ffc.fr

FISHING

Union Nationale pour la Pêche en France

17 rue Bergère, 75009
Paris. **Tel 01 48 24 96 00.**
www.unpf.fr

GOLF

Fédération Française de Golf

68 rue Anatole France,
92300 Levallois Perret.
Tel 01 41 49 77 00.
www.ffgolf.org

HORSE RIDING

Fédération Française d'Équitation

81-83 av Edouard
Vaillant, 92517 Boulogne
Billancourt
Tel 01 58 17 58 17.
www.ffe.com

SAILING/SURFING

Fédération Française de Voile

17 rue Henri-Bocquillon,
75015 Paris.
Tel 01 40 60 37 00.
www.ffvoile.org

CANOING AND KAYAKING

Fédération Française de Canoë-Kayak

87 quai de la Marne,
94344 Joinville le Pont
Cedex.
Tel 01 45 11 08 50.
www.fcanoee.asso.fr

THE LOIRE FROM THE AIR

Fédération Française de Vol Libre

4 rue de Suisse, 06000
Nice. **Tel 04 97 03 82 82.**
www.fvfl.fr

Fédération Nationale Aéronautique (FNA)

155 av de Wagram,
75017 Paris. **Tel 01 44 29
92 00.** **www.fna.asso.fr**

France Montgolfières

24 rue Nationale, 41400
Montrichard.
Tel 02 54 32 20 48.
**www.france-
montgolfieres.com**





SURVIVAL GUIDE



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TRAVEL INFORMATION 240-247



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

In the Loire Valley, as elsewhere in France, the peak holiday period is from mid-June to the end of August. The area is very well prepared to meet the practical needs of its many visitors, however, providing accommodation ranging from top hotels and private châteaux to small camp sites, as well as a selection of excellent restaurants.

Because of the profusion of places of great historical, aesthetic or natural interest, ranging from stunning châteaux and cathedrals to windswept Atlantic beaches and wild marshlands, it is a



National logo for tourist information

good idea to draw up a list of priority visits before you travel. You should also check that the places you plan to visit are not closed for seasonal breaks or for restoration work. Before you leave home, the French Government Tourist Offices are invaluable sources of information. The local tourist information offices in most towns in the region offer advice on the spot.

With a wide variety of activities available, the Loire Valley has something to offer all its visitors. The following tips will help you make the most of your visit.



Tourist information office in Fontenay-le-Comte

TOURIST INFORMATION

Most large towns have a tourist information office, known either as the *Syndicat d'Initiative* or the *Office de Tourisme*. This guide provides the address and telephone number of the tourist office in each town featured in its pages. In smaller towns the town hall (*hôtel de ville*) will offer information. Tourist offices supply free maps, advice on accommodation (which can include booking hotels) and information on regional recreational and cultural activities, such as festivals. The main branches are listed opposite. You can also obtain details in advance from French Government Tourist Offices before leaving your own country.

OPENING TIMES

Most shops and banks open from 8 or 9am until noon, and from 2 or 3pm until 4:30pm (banks) or 6:30 or 7:30pm (shops), Tuesday to Saturday (see pp220–21 and pp236–7). Opening hours vary with the size of town. Many shops and banks are closed on Mondays and also close for lunch daily, although big department stores, supermarkets, tourist offices and some sights may remain open all day. Restaurants may close for one day a week, so do check before setting off (see pp208–19).



Brochures for sights in the Loire Valley

Off season, some seaside resorts, as well as many châteaux and smaller museums, close down for several months, so it is best to telephone to check.

SIGHTSEEING

In France, many museums close for lunch – normal opening hours are between 9am and noon and from 2pm until 5:30pm. They usually also close for one day each week, generally on Mondays or Tuesdays. Opening hours tend to vary according to the season. Generally, most museums are open for longer



Tables outside a café in Les Sables d'Olonne



Entertainment at a festival in Luçon

hours between May and September.

Museum admission charges range from around 2€ to 7€. Passes for more than one museum or monument are rare. Normally, you will need to buy separate tickets for each sight within a town.

There are usually some discounts available for students who have valid International Student Identity Cards (ISIC) (see p233). Anyone aged under 18 or over 65 can also be eligible for a price reduction. Some museums and monuments are free for one day a month, usually the first Sunday; some may also offer reductions on certain days. Churches and cathedrals

open every day but may shut during lunch. There is sometimes a small charge to visit cloisters, bell-towers and crypts.



National logo for the disabled

DISABLED ACCESS

Although in some of the Loire Valley's medieval villages, narrow streets can make it difficult for disabled travellers to get around, wheelchair access in the area is generally good. Many châteaux and museums offer special services and facilities for disabled visitors, which staff are happy to explain; however, it is advisable to telephone and check about access before your visit. Access to hotels and restaurants has been improved

in many cases to accommodate disabled customers. Information specific to the area is available from town halls or from regional tourist offices. Parking spaces reserved for vehicles that have disabled permits are marked with a special sign. For more information about special facilities for the disabled before departure, contact the International Relations Department of the **Association des Paralysés de France (APF)**.

Two websites (www.handiweb.fr and www.handitec.com) offer detailed information about the legal provision in France for disabled travellers, as well as useful information and relevant addresses.

ENTERTAINMENT INFORMATION

There are several sources of entertainment information in the Loire Valley. Magazines and brochures listing forthcoming events are available at tourist information offices as well as in many hotels and camp sites. Both newsmagazines (*maisons de la presse*) and some tobacconists' shops (*tabacs*) sell newspapers and magazines. Local papers can also provide details of festivals and sporting events as well as the weather forecast.



Sign for a tobacconist

DIRECTORY

FRENCH GOVERNMENT TOURIST OFFICES ABROAD

Australia

Level 13, 25 Bligh St, Sydney, NSW 2000. **Tel** (02) 9231 5244. <http://au.franceguide.com>

Canada

1918 Ave McGill College, Suite 490, Montréal, Quebec H3A 2W9. **Tel** (514) 288 2026. <http://ca-uk.franceguide.com>

United Kingdom

178 Piccadilly, London W1J 9AL. **Tel** 09068 244 123. <http://uk.franceguide.com>

United States

444 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10022. **Tel** (514) 288 1904. <http://us.franceguide.com>

TOURIST OFFICES IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Angers

Pl Kennedy. **Tel** 02 41 23 50 00. www.angersloiretourisme.com

Blois

23 pl du Château. **Tel** 02 54 90 41 41. www.loiredeschateaux.com

Bourges

21 rue Victor-Hugo. **Tel** 02 48 23 02 60. www.bourgestourisme.com

Chartres

Pl de la Cathédrale. **Tel** 02 37 18 26 26. www.chartres-tourisme.com

Le Mans

Rue de l'Etoile. **Tel** 02 43 28 17 22. www.ville-lemans.com

Nantes

Pl du Commerce. **Tel** 02 40 20 60 00. www.nantes-tourisme.com

Orléans

2 pl de l'Etape. **Tel** 02 38 24 05 05. www.tourisme-orleans.com

Tours

78 rue Bernard Palissy. **Tel** 02 47 70 37 37. www.ligeris.com

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Association des Paralysés de France (APF)

17 bvd Auguste Blanqui, Paris 75013. **Tel** 01 40 78 69 00. www.apf.asso.fr

VISAS

There are no visa requirements for citizens of the European Union. Tourists from the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand who are staying in France for less than 90 days need not apply for a visa. After 90 days, a *visa de long séjour* is required. Visitors from other countries should request visa information from the French authorities in their own country before departure.



French perfumes, available tax-free

DUTY-FREE LIMITS

For travel within the EU duty free was abolished in June 1999. For non-EU nationals arriving in the EU, the following may be imported: up to 2 litres of wine, and a litre of spirits or 2 litres of drink less than 22° proof; 50g of perfume; 500g of coffee; 100g of tea; and up to 200 cigarettes. Visitors under 17 may not import or export duty-free tobacco or alcohol, even as gifts.

TAX-FREE GOODS

If you are resident outside the European Union, you can reclaim the TVA (VAT or sales tax) on certain French goods if you spend more than 175€ (including tax) in the same shop in one day, obtain *un bordereau de vente à l'exportation* (an export sales form) and take the goods out of the EU within three months. Ask for this form when making your purchases. It consists of two sheets that must be signed by the retailer and yourself. Present both form and goods at customs when leaving the EU. On returning home, send the pink sheet back to the retailer (who must receive it within six months of the sale), and the refund will be sent on to you, usually via your bank.

The main exceptions for *détaxe* rebate are food and drink, medicines, tobacco, cars and motorbikes.

DUTY-PAID LIMITS

There are no longer any restrictions on the quantities of duty-paid and VAT-paid goods you are allowed to take from one European Union country to another, as long as the goods are for your own use and are not intended for resale. Customs officers may ask you to prove that the goods are for your personal use if they exceed the suggested amounts: 10 litres of spirits, 90 litres of wine, 110 litres of beer and 800 cigarettes.

IMPORTING OTHER GOODS

In general, personal goods (such as a car or a bicycle) may be imported to France duty-free and without any paperwork as long as they are obviously for personal use and not for resale. *Voyagez en toute liberté*, a brochure

available from the **Info Douane Service**, clarifies this. At the border, customs officers are also able to give advice and information, although this is likely to be in French.

Special rules apply, both within and without the EU, for the import and export of endangered plant and animal species, works of art and national treasures, human medicines, weapons and ammunition. Consult your own, or French, customs.



An ISIC international student card

STUDENT INFORMATION

Students who hold a valid International Student Identification Card (ISIC card) can benefit from discounts of 50 per cent or more when they produce the card at museums, theatres, cinemas and also at many public monuments. The region's principal universities are in Nantes and Tours. Other large universities are located in the towns of Le Mans, Angers, Laval, Orléans and La Roche-sur-Yon.

In Orléans, the **Centre Régional d'Information Jeunesse** offers a great deal of useful information about student life in the area and can also provide a list of inexpensive accommodation for young people.

ANIMALS

There is no bar to bringing pets to France, so long as the animal is at least three months old, has microchip identification and a certificate of vaccination against rabies, issued by a registered vet.

ETIQUETTE

It is important to respect the French rituals of politeness, which apply in the Loire Valley just as much as they do elsewhere in the country.



Friends greeting each other with two or three kisses

When you are introduced to someone, it is correct to shake hands with them. In shops, you should be prepared to say *bonjour* to the assistant before asking for what you want, and then *merci* when you receive your change and finally *au revoir*, *bonne journée* (good-bye, have a nice day) when you depart. The usual greeting among friends of either sex is generally two or three kisses on the cheek.

Throughout the Loire Valley region, and particularly in the smaller communities, all efforts by English speakers to make enthusiastic use of their French, however limited, and to show a real interest in the area will be met with encouragement by the local people.

LOIRE VALLEY TIME

The Loire Valley is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). France is in the same time zone as Germany, Italy, Spain and other western European countries.

Standard time differences between the Loire Valley and some major cities of the world are as follows: London: minus 1 hour; New York: minus 6 hours; Dallas: minus 7 hours;

Los Angeles: minus 9 hours; Perth: plus 7 hours; Sydney: plus 9 hours; Auckland: plus 11 hours; and Tokyo: plus 8 hours. These can vary according to local summer alterations to the time.

The French use the 24-hour clock (they do not use the am and pm system): after midday, just continue counting 13, 14 and so on to provide the 24-hour clock time. For example, 1pm = 13:00.

CONVERSION CHART

Imperial to metric

To convert	Multiply by
Inches to centimetres	2.54
Feet to metres	0.3
Yards to metres	0.91
Miles to kilometres	1.6
Ounces to grams	28
Pounds to kilograms	0.45
Pints (UK) to litres	0.6
Gallons (UK) to litres	4.5

Metric to imperial

To convert	Multiply by
Centimetres to inches	0.4
Metres to feet	3.3
Metres to yards	1.09
Kilometres to miles	0.6
Grams to ounces	0.04
Kilograms to pounds	2.2
Litres to pints (UK)	1.8
Litres to gallons (UK)	0.22



French two-pin electrical plug

ELECTRICAL ADAPTORS

The Voltage in France is 220 volts. The plugs on French electrical appliances have two small round pins; the heavier-duty appliances have two large round pins. Some up-market hotels offer built-in adaptors for shavers only.

Multi-adaptors, which are useful because they have both large and small pins, can be bought at most airports before departure. Standard adaptors can be purchased from most department stores.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Although the major religion in the region is Catholicism, the Loire Valley also has many Protestant churches, and some Jewish synagogues and Islamic mosques, particularly in the larger towns. These reflect the religious diversity of modern French society.

DIRECTORY

CUSTOMS INFORMATION

Info Douane Service

Tel 08 20 02 44 44.

www.douane.gouv.fr

STUDENT INFORMATION

Orléans

Centre Régional d'Information Jeunesse, 3-5 blvd de Verdun.
Tel 02 38 78 91 78.

www.crij-centre.org

YOUTH HOSTELS

Angers

Centre d'Accueil du Lac de Maine, 49 av du Lac de Maine.
Tel 02 41 22 32 10.

www.lacdemaine.fr

Bourges

Auberge de Jeunesse, 22 rue Henri Sellier.
Tel 02 48 24 58 09.
bourges@fuaj.org

Le Mans

Auberge de Jeunesse, 23 rue Maupertuis.
Tel 02 43 81 27 55.
florejft@noos.fr

Nantes

Auberge de Jeunesse, 2 pl de la Manu.
Tel 02 40 29 29 20.
nanteslamanu@fuaj.org

Orléans

Auberge de Jeunesse, 7 av Beaumarchais.
Tel 02 38 53 60 06.

Tours

Auberge de Jeunesse, 5 rue Bretonneau.
Tel 02 47 37 81 58.
tours@fuaj.org

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Catholic

La Cathédrale St-Etienne, Pl de la Cathédrale, Bourges.
Tel 02 48 65 72 89.

La Cathédrale

Notre-Dame, Pl de la Cathédrale, Chartres.
Tel 02 37 21 75 02.

La Cathédrale St-Gatien, Pl de la Cathédrale, Tours.
Tel 02 47 70 37 36.

La Cathédrale

St-Pierre-et-St-Paul, Pl St-Pierre, Nantes.
Tel 02 40 47 84 64.

Protestant

Temple Protestant, 5 rue du Musée, Angers.
Tel 02 41 48 06 07.

Eglise Protestante, 21 rue de Cheverus, Laval.
Tel 02 43 53 74 90.

Jewish

Synagogue, 4-6 pl Paixhans, Le Mans.

Synagogue, 14 rue Robert de Courtenay, Orléans.

Islamic

Mosquée, Av Rembrandt, Le Mans.

Grande Mosquée de Tours, 18 rue Lobin, Tours.
Tel 02 47 66 38 03.

Personal Security and Health

On the whole, the Loire Valley is a safe place for visitors: take normal precautions, such as keeping an eye on your possessions at all times, and avoid isolated and unlit urban areas at night. If you fall ill during your stay, pharmacies are an excellent source of advice. Consular offices can offer help and advice in an emergency. In the case of a serious medical problem, call the emergency services.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

In big cities, try not to carry conspicuous valuables with you and only take as much cash as you think you will need. Traveller's cheques are the safest method of carrying large sums of money. You should always make sure you are covered by an adequate insurance policy.

In major towns, most multi-storey car parks are kept under surveillance by video cameras. Parking there will reduce the threat of car crime

and avoid the greater risk of parking in an illegal space and being towed away to a police pound.

In the event of a theft, go to the nearest police station, or *gendarmerie*, with your passport or other identity papers (and vehicle registration and insurance documents, if relevant). The report process (a *PV* or *procès-verbal*) may take time, but you will need a full police statement for any insurance claim. If your passport is stolen, contact the police and your nearest consulate.



Policeman

Fireman

PERSONAL SAFETY

Violent crime is rare in the Loire Valley, although random incidents are sometimes reported. If travelling late at night, it is a good idea, especially for women, to remain within busy, well-lit areas and to be careful about talking to, or accompanying, strangers. If you are involved in a dispute or car accident, avoid confrontation. In potentially difficult situations, try to stay calm and speak French if you can, as your efforts may diffuse the situation.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

If your insurance policy is comprehensive, including a service in France such as Europ Assistance or Mondial Assistance, they will be able to help with legal advice on claims, such as accident procedure. If not, you should call your nearest consulate office and ask their advice.

INTERPRETERS

If you require an interpreter, telephone the Société Française des Traducteurs or contact them via email.

BEACH AND RIVER SAFETY

Most of the beaches on the Atlantic coast are guarded in the summer by life-guards (*sauveteurs*). There are a number of good family



Ambulance



Fire engine



Police car

beaches, where bathing is not generally dangerous. However, look for the system of coloured flags, which tells bathers whether it is safe to swim. Green flags mean that bathing is permitted and is safe. Orange flags warn that bathing may be dangerous and usually only part of the beach is guarded.

The guarded area is marked out by flags, beyond which you should not swim. Very dangerous conditions (high waves, shifting sands and strong undercurrents) are denoted by red flags, which mean that any bathing is strictly forbidden. Many of the region's beaches also display the blue flags, which are used throughout the European Union as a sign of cleanliness.

The River Loire and its tributaries also tempt summer bathers, but beware of the treacherous currents and shifting sands. It is safest to stick to established bathing areas.



A green flag shows the sea is safe for bathers

MEDICAL TREATMENT

All European Union nationals are entitled to French social security coverage, but treatment must be paid for at the time, and hospital rates vary. Reimbursements may be claimed if you have obtained a European Health Insurance

Card before leaving. The claims process can be lengthy, so it is best to purchase your own insurance. The law obliges non-EU nationals to carry medical insurance, taken out in the visitor's home country before departure. In case

of medical emergencies, call the SAMU (ambulance) or the *Sapeurs Pompiers* (fire service), who offer a first aid and ambulance service.

French pharmacists are able to diagnose minor health problems and to suggest appropriate treatments. Pharmacies can be recognized by the green cross sign outside their shops.

DIRECTORY

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance (SAMU)

Tel 15.

Fire (Sapeurs Pompiers)

Tel 18.

Police (Gendarmerie)

Tel 17.

TRANSLATORS

Société Française des Traducteurs

Tel 01 42 93 99 96. www.sft.fr

HOSPITALS

Angers

Centre Hospitalier, 4 rue Larrey.

Tel 02 41 35 36 37.

www.chu-angers.fr

Bourges

Centre Hospitalier Jacques-Coeur,

145 ave François Mitterrand.

Tel 02 48 48 48 48.

www.ch-bourges.fr

Le Mans

Centre Hospitalier du Mans,

194 avenue Rubillard.

Tel 02 43 43 43 40.

Nantes

Centre Hospitalier Hôtel Dieu,

pl Alexis Ricordeau. Tel 02 40

08 33 33. www.chu-nantes.fr

Orléans

Centre Hospitalier Régional,

14 av Hôpital. Tel 02 38 51

44 44. www.chr-orleans.fr

Tours

Hôpital Bretonneau, 2 Blvd

Tonnellé. Tel 02 47 47 47 47.

www.chu-tours.fr

CONSULATES AND EMBASSIES

Australia

4 rue Jean Rey, 75724 Paris.

Tel 01 40 59 33 00.

www.france.embassy.gouv.au

Canada

35 av Montaigne, 75008 Paris.

Tel 01 44 43 29 00.

www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca

UK

18 rue d'Anjou, 75008 Paris.

Tel 01 44 51 31 00.

www.britishembassy.gov.uk

US

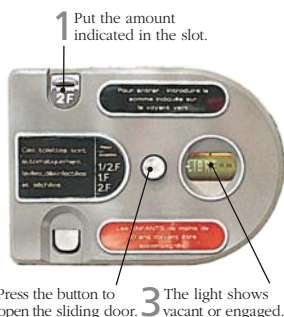
2 av Gabriel, 75382 Paris. Tel 01

43 12 22 22. www.amb-usa.fr

PUBLIC TOILETS IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Modern automatic toilets are now found in many towns in the Loire Valley. Do not let children under ten use these alone as the automatic cleaning function can be dangerous.

Even when using the toilets in cafés or restaurants where you are a customer, you should take some change with you, as there is often a small charge or you may be expected to leave a tip for the cleaner. Traditional *pissoirs* and keyhole toilets, still found in more rural areas, are not always very clean. Toilet facilities are provided on the *autoroute* at drive-in rest areas every 20 km (12 miles) or so.



1 Put the amount indicated in the slot.
2 Press the button to open the sliding door.
3 The light shows vacant or engaged.

Banking and Local Currency

In the Loire Valley, as elsewhere in France, the banks usually offer the best rates of exchange. Privately owned *bureaux de change* are common in tourist areas, especially around the châteaux, but tend to have more variable rates. Take care to check the commission and minimum charges before you complete a transaction. Traveller's cheques are still the safest form of money, but using credit or debit cards to withdraw cash from automated teller machines (ATMs) beats bank queues any day, although you will undoubtedly be charged by the card issuer for this service.

BANKING HOURS

Generally speaking, banks in larger French towns are open from 9am to noon and from 2 to 4:30pm, Tuesday to Saturday. Most are often closed on Mondays. Over public holiday weekends, banks may be shut from noon Friday until Tuesday morning. Be aware that opening hours can be more limited in smaller towns.

OBTAINING MONEY

There is no limit to the amount of money visitors may bring into or take out of France. If you are carrying cash or traveller's cheques worth more than 7,600€, however, you should declare it to French customs.

French banks offer foreign currency exchange services only to their existing clients, unless they have a dedicated foreign exchange counter. As a result, the simplest and most convenient way to get cash in France is to use one of the many ATMs found at airports, banks and shopping malls, among other places. Most ATMs take major credit and debit cards, with Visa and MasterCard the most widely accepted. To withdraw money, you need to enter a four-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number, or *code confidentiel*). ATM instructions are usually given in several languages, including English.



Keypad to check your PIN

Another alternative is changing money in main post offices in larger towns or at an independent *bureau de change*; however, the latter may offer less attractive exchange rates.

In some banks, it is also possible to withdraw cash on Visa or MasterCard at the counter. You will need your passport or some form of ID to make the transaction.

TRAVELLER'S CHEQUES AND CREDIT CARDS

Traveller's cheques can be obtained from American Express, Thomas Cook or your bank, building society or some post offices. American Express cheques are widely accepted in France, and Amex offices exchange them without charging commission.

In France, Visa/ Carte Bleue and Eurocard/MasterCard are the most common credit cards, while American Express cards are not always accepted.

French credit and debit cards are now smart cards (*cartes à puce*). Retailers are equipped with machines that read smart cards and older magnetic strips. If your card cannot be read in the smart card slot, you will be told you have a *puce morte*. Ask the cashier to put the card through the *bande magnétique* (magnetic reader). You may also have to tap in your PIN and press the green key (*validez*) on a small keypad.

DIRECTORY

BUREAUX DE CHANGE

Angers

Office de Tourisme,
11 pl Président
Kennedy.
Tel 02 41 23 50 00.

Blois

Office de Tourisme et des
Congrès,
23 pl des Châteaux.
Tel 02 54 90 41 41.

Bourges

La Poste Principale,
29 rue Moyenne.
Tel 02 48 68 82 82.

Chartres

Place de la Cathédrale
Tel 02 37 36 42 33.

Le Mans

La Poste,
13 pl de la République.

Nantes

Le Change Graslin,
17 rue Jean-Jacques
Rousseau.
Tel 02 40 69 24 64.

Orléans

La Poste,
pl de Gaulle.
Tel 02 38 77 35 35.

Tours

La Gare (train station),
pl du Maréchal Leclerc.
Tel 02 47 66 78 89.

LOST CARDS AND TRAVELLER'S CHEQUES

Visa
Tel 0800 90 11 79.
American Express Paris
Tel 01 47 77 72 00.
MasterCard/Eurocard
Tel 0800 90 13 87.

THE EURO

The Euro (€), the single European currency, is now operational in 12 member states of the EU. Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg,

Netherlands, Portugal and Spain all chose to join the new currency; Denmark, the UK and Sweden chose to stay out, with an option to review their decision. France's Overseas Departments (Réunion etc) also all now use the euro. Euro notes are identical

throughout all 12 countries, bearing architectural drawings of fictitious monuments. The coins, however, have one side identical (the value side), and one side unique to each country. Both notes and coins are valid and interchangeable within each of the 12 countries.

Bank Notes

Euro bank notes have seven denominations. The 5€ note (grey in colour) is the smallest, followed by the 10€ note (pink), 20€ note (blue), 50€ note (orange), 100€ note (green), 200€ note (yellow) and 500€ note (purple). All notes show the stars of the European Union.



5 euros



10 euros



20 euros



50 euros



100 euros



200 euros



500 euros



2 euros



1 euro



50 cents



20 cents



10 cents

Coins

The euro has eight coin denominations: 1€ and 2€; 50 cents, 20 cents, 10 cents, 5 cents, 2 cents and 1 cent. The 1€ and 2€ coins are both silver and gold in colour. The 50-, 20- and 10-cent coins are gold. The 5-, 2- and 1-cent coins are bronze.



5 cents



2 cents



1 cent

Communications



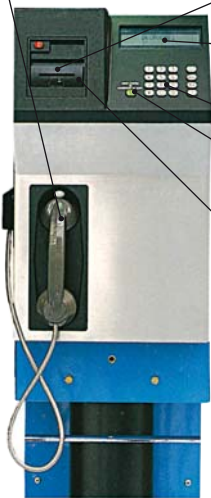
Sign for public telephone

French telecommunications are among the most advanced in the world. The national agency is France Télécom, while postal services are run by La Poste. Public telephones are well distributed throughout the Loire Valley. They take a telephone card (*télécarte*), which can be purchased at local shops.

Post offices, or *bureaux de postes*, are identified by the blue-on-yellow La Poste sign. Road signs may still say PTT, as La Poste was formerly known. Foreign newspapers are available in most large towns, and some TV channels broadcast English-language programmes.

USING A PHONECARD TELEPHONE

- 1 Lift the receiver and wait for the dialling tone.
- 2 Insert the *télécarte* with the arrow side facing up.
- 3 The screen displays the number of units still available, then gives you instructions to key in the phone number.
- 4 Key in the phone number and wait to be connected.
- 5 If you want to make another call, do not replace the receiver: simply press the green follow-on call button.
- 6 Replace the receiver after the call. When card re-emerges, remove it.



French phonecards



TELEPHONING IN FRANCE

All French public phone boxes now take phone cards (*télécartes*) and most take credit cards. The last few coin telephones vanished with the advent of the euro. Phone cards are sold in units of either 50 or 120, and are easy to use. They can be purchased at post offices, tobacconists (*tabacs*) and some newsagents.

To call a number in France, simply dial the ten-digit number. Numbers beginning 06 are mobile phones and more expensive to call. To call abroad, you can either dial direct or make a reverse-charge call (*PCV*) via the

international operator. A cheaper option is to buy a pre-paid phone card (*carte à codes*) from a tobacconist or newsagent. Each card has a unique code that you dial to access a line. Alternatively, arrange a phone charge card through your phone company before you travel to France. You will be issued with a personal identification number (PIN), which you can use to dial from any phone; the costs are billed to your home account or to a credit card.

Avoid making international calls from hotels, since they tend to add a hefty surcharge. Cheap rates operate from



Mail boxes throughout France are a distinctive yellow

7pm to 8am Monday to Friday, as well as all day Saturday and Sunday and public holidays.

Most European mobile phones can be used in France as normal, but make sure that you have international access. You will also need a code to retrieve voice messages. US mobiles need to be tri-band.

SENDING A LETTER

Postage stamps (*timbres*) are sold at La Poste singly or in *carnets* of ten. They are also sold at tobacconists. There are three different price zones for international mail.

Post office hours vary. The minimum hours are around 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday with a two-hour lunch break from noon to 2pm. On Saturdays they are open from 9am until noon. In larger towns, the main post office may remain open on weekdays from 8am until 7pm.

Letters and parcels can be sent worldwide. Letters are dropped into yellow mail boxes, which often have three slots – one for the town you are in; one for the surrounding *département* (the Loire Valley is divided into eleven *départements*, each with its own postcode); and one for other destinations (*autres destinations*).

For a small collection fee, you can also receive or send mail care of post offices in France (*poste restante*). The sender should write the recipient's name in block letters, followed by "Poste Restante", then the postcode and the name of the town to which the letter is to be sent.

OTHER SERVICES

At post offices you can consult telephone directories (*annuaires*), send or receive money orders (*mandats*) and make use of fax and telex. Most main post offices also have internet terminals. To use them, buy a rechargeable pre-paid card at the counter.

A lot of information is available from the Minitel electronic directory, which is holding its own against the internet (the internet phone directory is available via www.pagesjaunes.fr). The service is free and can be found at many post offices.

TELEVISION AND RADIO

BBC World, CNN and other major satellite channels are available in many hotels. The Franco-German channel ARTE broadcasts programmes and films from all over the world, often in the original language with French subtitles.

Details for the BBC World Service can be found at www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice.

HOW TO KEY IN TO MINITEL

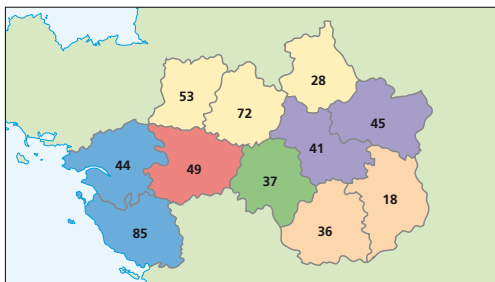


Minitel provides a vast range of services through a screen and keyboard connected to the telephone line.

To use the system, press on/off button, then screen lights up to show a list of options, the first one being *3611 annuaire*. When beeping starts, press *Connexion/Fin*. Specify the service, the name of supplier, or the name of the individual required. Enter town or area and press *Envoi* to start. To disconnect, press *Veille* or *Connexion/Fin*. Charges payable are then displayed on the screen.

THE DÉPARTEMENTS OF THE LOIRE VALLEY

France is divided into 96 *départements*. Each *département* has its own two-digit number, and this is the first number of the postcode for any address in the *département*. If the postcode has three zeros at the end, the address lies within the *département's* main town.



Département	Postcode	Main Town
Cher	18	Bourges
Eure-et-Loir	28	Chartres
Indre	36	Châteauroux
Indre-et-Loire	37	Tours
Loir-et-Cher	41	Blois
Loire-Atlantique	44	Nantes
Loiret	45	Orléans
Maine-et-Loire	49	Angers
Mayenne	53	Laval
Sarthe	72	Le Mans
Vendée	85	La Roche-sur-Yon

FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS

In most main towns, English-language newspapers such as the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* are often available for sale on the day of issue. Most other English newspapers as well as Swiss, Italian, German and Spanish titles are sold on the day of publication during the summer months and a day later out of season. *The European* magazine is published on Fridays.



A range of the newspapers available in the Loire Valley

USEFUL DIALLING CODES

- To **call France**, dial: from the UK and US: 00 33; from Australia: 00 11 33. Omit the first 0 of the French area code.
- For **operator service**, dial 118 218 or 118 712.
- For **international directory enquiries**, dial: 32 12.
- For an **international operator**, dial 08 36 59 31 23.
- To make direct **international calls**, dial 00 first.
- The **country codes** are:
 - Australia, 61;
 - Canada and US, 1;
 - Eire, 353;
 - New Zealand, 64;
 - UK, 44.
- In the event of an **emergency**, dial 17.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Forming a broad band about 110 km (70 miles) south of Paris and stretching from the centre of France in the east to the Atlantic coast in the west, the Loire Valley is relatively well served by international motorway and rail links. The city of Nantes has an international airport with flights to many major European cities; while discount airlines from Britain and Ireland now serve Tours and Angers. For travelling across the region, the TGV (see pp242-4) is a swift option; and the motorways are excellent, if a little crowded in summer.



Road sign to Nantes airport

ARRIVING BY AIR

The region's main gateway is Nantes-Atlantique Airport, which has flights from most European cities, and Montreal. Coming from Britain and Ireland, you can now also fly to Angers and Tours. Nantes-Atlantique and Angers airports have information desks where staff will make hotel reservations, if necessary. Nantes also has a bank with a bureau de change; when it is closed, you can get euros at the information desk. There is no currency exchange facility at Angers or Tours, though Angers does have an ATM machine.

From Nantes and Angers airports, there are shuttle buses to and from the town centres timed to coincide with most flight arrivals and departures. At Tours, the shuttle bus meets Ryanair flights only. A taxi to central Nantes will cost about 25€, to Angers 30€ and to Tours 20€. The main car rental companies also have outlets at the airports.

AIRLINE DETAILS

British Airways flies from London Gatwick to Nantes daily, except Saturday. Budget carrier Ryanair operates daily flights to Nantes, from London Stansted; three flights a week from Nottingham East Midlands; five from Dublin; and three from Shannon in Ireland. Ryanair also flies to Tours from Stansted several times a week (Apr-Oct). Flybe links Southampton with Angers three times a week (May-Oct);

while Aer Arann operates three flights a week each from Manchester, Luton and Cork (May-mid-Sep).



Airport trolley slot machine

From Canada, Air Canada and Air France fly direct to Paris; while Air Transat operates a weekly flight from Montreal direct to Nantes (May-Oct). Several airlines offer direct flights to Paris from the US, while from Australia and

New Zealand you will have to travel via London or another European hub. Air France operates at least four daily flights from Paris to Nantes.

FARES AND DEALS

Ryanair, Flybe and Aer Arann offer the cheapest flights, especially if you book well in advance. Low-season promotional fares can cost next to nothing. Fares on full-service airlines, such as BA and Air France, are at their highest over the Easter period and in July and August. Other airlines may have different peak periods, so check to find out which fares will apply when you travel.

For flights only, Advance Purchase Excursion fares (APEX) are relatively inexpensive but they have to be booked well in advance. They cannot be changed or



The interior of Nantes-Atlantique Airport

cancelled without a penalty and contain minimum and maximum stay clauses. The price of a standard fare ticket is often cheaper if your visit includes at least one Saturday overnight stay.

These days there are some very attractive deals on offer, both for charter and regular scheduled flights, so look around for the best option.

If you book a cheap deal with a discount agent, check that the agent belongs to a recognized regulatory body. This may guarantee that you will get a refund if the agent should cease trading. Do not part with the full fare until you have seen the ticket. Check with the relevant airline to ensure that your seat has been confirmed, and reconfirm your return journey.

FLY-DRIVE AND FLY-RAIL

Air France and the French railways offer combined fares for flight and train. You fly into Paris and then catch a train. Good deals are available to Angers, Nantes and Tours. Other companies offer tailor-made package holidays in the Loire Valley with flight, car hire and accommodation all included in the cost.



A Boeing 737 jet belonging to the national airline, Air France

FLIGHT TIMES

On long-haul flights you will need to change planes in Paris or London. Approximate flight times to the region from major cities are as follows:

London: 1 hour, 25 mins.
Paris: 1 hour.
New York: 10 hours.

SAFETY IN THE AIR

Passengers should make sure that their baggage is securely fastened and tagged and not left unattended at the airport. Never look after or check in baggage for somebody else. You are likely to be asked

whether you are carrying any electrical goods; it is advisable to keep these to a minimum.

If you are travelling with very young children, advise the airline as soon as possible in order to reserve a "skycot".

Pregnant women should check in advance with the airline to ensure they will be allowed to fly: most airlines have a cut-off date of 36 weeks. Between 28 and 36 weeks it is necessary to have a letter from your doctor stating that you are healthy enough to travel, and giving your estimated delivery date.

You should inform the airline in advance if you have any specific dietary needs.

DIRECTORY

AIRPORT INFORMATION

Angers Airport

Tel 02 41 33 50 20.

www.angersloire.aeroport.fr

Nantes-Atlantique Airport

Tel 02 40 84 80 00.

www.nantes-aeroport.fr

Tours Airport

Tel 02 47 49 37 00.

www.tours.aeroport.fr

AIRLINE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Aer Arann

UK Tel 0800 587 2324.

France Tel 01 53 43 53 95.

www.aerarann.com

Air Canada

UK Tel 0871 220 1111.

France Tel 0825 880 881.

www.aircanada.ca

Air France

UK Tel 0870 142 4343.

France Tel 0820 820 820.

www.airfrance.com

Air Transat

France Tel 0825 120 248.

www.airtransat.com

British Airways

UK Tel 0870 850 9850.

France Tel 0825 82 54 00.

www.britishairways.com

Delta

UK Tel 0845 600 0950.

France Tel 0811 640 005.

www.delta.com

Flybe

UK Tel 0871 700 0535.

www.flybecom

Qantas Airways

UK Tel 0845 774 7767.

France Tel 0820 820

500. www.qantas.com

Ryanair

UK Tel 0871 246 0000.

France Tel 0892 232 375.

www.ryanair.com

DISCOUNT TRAVEL AGENCIES

Loire Valley

Nouvelles Frontières

Angers Tel 02 41 88 41 41.

Bourges Tel 02 48 24 54 07

Le Mans Tel 02 43 24 32 43.

Nantes Tel 02 40 20 24 61.

Orléans Tel 02 38 53 75 00

Tours Tel 02 47 64 64 50.

www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr

UK

Trailfinders

Tel 0845 050 5940.

www.trailfinders.co.uk

Travelbag

Tel 0870 814 4444.

www.travelbag.co.uk

TAILOR-MADE PACKAGE HOLIDAYS

Allez France

Tel 0845 330 2056.

www.allezfrance.com

Can Be Done Ltd

(for disabled travellers)

Tel (020) 8907 2400.

www.canbedone.co.uk

Cresta Holidays

Tel 0870 238 7711.

www.crestaholidays.co.uk.

Getting Around by Train

Travelling to the Loire Valley by train is fast and efficient. The French state railway, the Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français (SNCF), is one of Europe's best equipped and most punctual. The train journey from Paris to Nantes or to Tours is very quick – the TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*) takes only 2 hours and 10 minutes to Nantes, and 75 minutes to Tours. With the Eurostar high-speed service running through the Channel Tunnel, travel from London to the Loire Valley takes around 5–6 hours.

MAIN ROUTES

The main train routes to the Loire Valley from Northern Europe pass through Paris. The TGV network links the port of Calais with Paris Gare du Nord station. From there, passengers must transfer to Gare Montparnasse, before continuing their journey on the TGV Atlantique to the main towns in the Loire region. Corail express trains to Nantes also leave from Gare Montparnasse, while Corail express trains to all other Loire Valley destinations leave from Gare d'Austerlitz. Tickets from London to all the Loire Valley towns, travelling via the Eurostar, hovercraft or ferry, are available from Rail Europe and SNCF offices. From southern Europe, trains run to Nantes from Madrid in Spain (with a journey time of around 16 hours) and Milan in Italy (with a journey time of around 11 hours).

Within the Loire Valley, the route along the River Loire via Nantes, Angers and Orléans is popular, so it is best to reserve tickets in advance on this and other *Grandes Lignes*.

BOOKING IN THE UK

French railways have UK postal and telephone contacts. Reservations made in the UK may be difficult to change in France, due to different computer booking systems. If you need to alter your return date you may have to pay for another reservation or, with Motorail, you will have to buy another ticket and then claim a refund on your return.

BOOKING IN FRANCE

Ticket counters at all the stations are computerized. There are also automatic ticket and reservation machines (with English instructions) on the concourse of main stations. You can also check timetables and purchase tickets online.

For travel by TGV, a ticket reservation is necessary, but this can be made as little as five minutes before the train leaves.

Ticket prices for all trains rise considerably at peak times, and reservations are compulsory during public holidays. The SNCF's international ticket and reservation system is connected by computer to most European travel agents and stations, allowing direct booking on services throughout Europe.

FARES AND BOOKING

TGV's have two price levels for 2nd class, normal and peak, and a single level for 1st class. The cost of the obligatory seat reservation is



Automatic ticket machine

included in the ticket price. Tickets for other trains have just one price level for both first and second class. Seat reservations, where available, are included.

Discounts are available for people travelling with children (*Découverte Enfant+*), for young people (*Découverte 12-25*), for the over 60's (*Découverte Senior*), for two people travelling together (must be a return trip – *Découverte à Deux*), for return trips including a Saturday night (*Découverte Sejour*) and for advance booking (*Prem's*). For those who use the railways a lot, up to 50 per cent discounts are available: *Carte Enfant+*, *Carte 12-25* and *Carte Senior*.

Rail passes purchased outside France include France Railpass (unlimited travel for 3–9 days a month), Inter-Rail (unlimited travel in selected European countries for European residents) and Eurail (for non-European residents).



SNCF logo



The ticket office at Chartres railway station

TIMES AND PENALTIES

Timetables change twice a year, and leaflets for main routes are free at stations. Trains in France are almost always on schedule. You must time-punch (*composter*) your ticket in the orange machine at the platform entrance or pay a penalty on the train.

BICYCLES

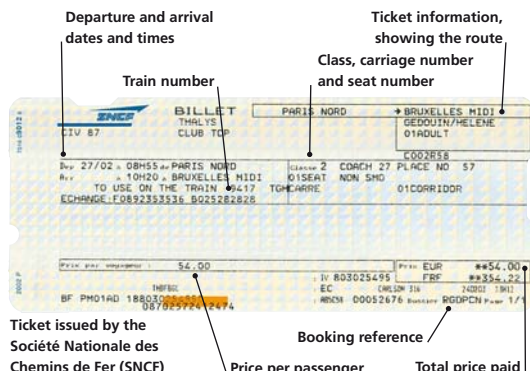
On main rail routes and on TER trains, bicycles are carried free of charge. On TGVs, they must be dismantled, placed in a carrying bag and stored in luggage spaces. On trains other than TGVs, bicycles can be carried in the guard's van or other designated places and do not need to be dismantled.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

People with disabilities can call the freephone number for the **SNCF Accessibilité Service** (see p244) for practical help and information. To ensure that the help you need is available at the appropriate

time and place, it is best to make any arrangements at least 24 hours in advance.

Les Compagnons du Voyage (see p244) is an association that provides a suitable companion to travel with you on any train journey outside the Paris area.



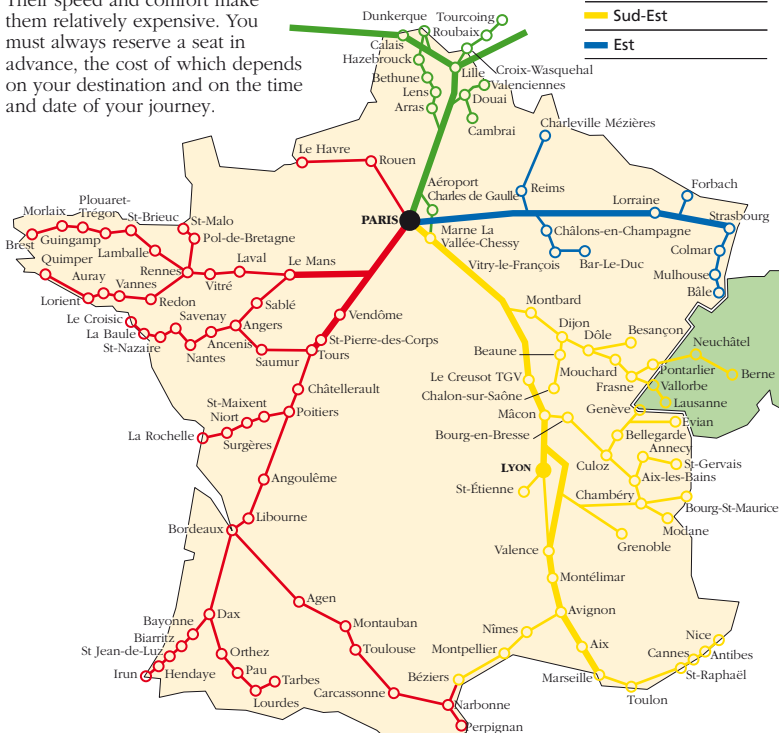
TGV RAIL SERVICE

Trains à Grande Vitesse, or high-speed trains, travel at up to 300 km/h (185 mph).

Their speed and comfort make them relatively expensive. You must always reserve a seat in advance, the cost of which depends on your destination and on the time and date of your journey.

KEY

- Nord
- Atlantique
- Sud-Est
- Est





A high-speed TGV arriving at the station in Tours

MAIN LINE STATIONS

Nantes has two station exits, the *Sortie Sud*, which brings you out in the new *Cité des Congrès* district, and the *Sortie Nord*, in the *Jardin des Plantes* district. Both are within walking distance of each other.

In Tours, most trains arrive at the suburban station of *St-Pierre-des-Corps*, from which a shuttle train (*navette*) takes passengers on to the town centre station in ten minutes.

A similar shuttle service operates in Orléans, where many main line trains arrive at *Les Aubrais* station, 3 km (2 miles) outside the town centre. In both cases, the price of the shuttle is included in the cost of the ticket, and shuttles are timed so that they coincide with main line services. When leaving, check whether the departure time given on your ticket is for the shuttle or the main line train.

EUROSTAR

Eurostar's striking yellow-and-white trains currently run about 15 services per day between London's *Waterloo International Station* and the *Gare du Nord* in Paris. Each train has first- and second-class compartments, with the option of a waiter-service meal in first class. You can also buy refreshments in the buffet car. The journey takes 3 hours. You must book tickets in advance and check in at

least 20 minutes before the departure time. To book, contact the **Rail Europe** office in London, ring the **Eurostar** bookings line or visit their website.

EUROTUNNEL

The Eurotunnel shuttle-service carries cars and coaches and their passengers through the Channel Tunnel in 35 minutes. Tickets can be bought in advance from travel agents, by calling the **Eurotunnel** Customer Service Centre or online, but it is also possible to purchase a ticket for the next train when you arrive at the terminals in Folkestone or Calais. There are up to four trains an hour during peak times in the summer, and roughly one every two hours at night. The terminals at each end have a range of restaurants and shops. Before boarding you go through passport and customs controls for both countries. This means you drive straight onto the motorway when you arrive at the other side.



The station forecourt in Tours

DIRECTORY

TICKET RESERVATIONS

Rail Europe (for Eurostar and onward bookings, including motorail)

178 Piccadilly,
London W1V 0BA
Tel 08708 371 371.
Motorail **Tel** 08702 415 415.
www.raileurope.co.uk

Rail Europe USA

226-230 West Chester Park,
White Plains, NY 10604.
Tel 888 4387 245 (freephone).
www.raileurope.com

Eurostar

UK **Tel** 08705 186 186.
France **Tel** 08 92 35 35 39.
www.eurostar.com

Eurotunnel

UK **Tel** 08705 353 353.
France **Tel** 08 10 63 03 04.
www.eurotunnel.com

SNCF Information & Reservations

France **Tel** 36 35.
www.sncf.fr
Ticket reservations
www.voyages-sncf.com

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Les Compagnons du Voyage

Tel 01 45 83 67 77.

SNCF Accessibilité Service

Tel 0800 15 47 53.

Getting Around by Road

France is a motorist's paradise, and the main route to the Loire Valley is via an excellent, if expensive, *autoroute* (motorway) network. There are many beautiful roads in the Loire region, particularly those running along the banks of the rivers. Popular routes, especially the Atlantic coastal roads and the roads leading between the châteaux, can be busy in high season, but are clearer at other times of year. The minimum age for driving in France is 18.

WHAT TO TAKE

If you are taking your own car to the Loire Valley, it is advisable to obtain a green card (a free extension of an existing policy from some insurers). Without it you only have third-party coverage in France, regardless of whether you have comprehensive cover in your own country. Drivers' organizations and most large insurance companies also offer special policies. It is compulsory to take the original registration document for your car, a current insurance certificate and a valid driving licence. You should also carry a passport or identification card. If your car is not fitted

with number plates showing the country of registration, a sticker indicating this must be displayed on the rear of the vehicle. The headlights of right-hand drive cars must be adjusted – kits for this are available at most ports. You must also carry a red warning triangle. Other recommended accessories include spare headlight bulbs, a first-aid kit and a fire extinguisher.

GETTING TO THE LOIRE VALLEY

Travellers from the UK arriving at Calais and Boulogne can avoid Paris by taking the A16 motorway south to Abbeville and then the newly opened

A28 via Rouen to Le Mans. At Le Mans, you can take the A11 for Chartres, Angers and Nantes, or head across country to Tours, Blois and Orléans. Alternatively, brave Paris and take the A1 south, skirt around the city centre and connect with the A10 for Orléans and Tours, and the A11.

From western Spain, take the A8 from San Sebastian to the border, then the A63 to Bordeaux and the A10 to Tours and Orléans. From the eastern Spanish coast you can reach Orléans on the A9, A62 and A20, passing via Narbonne and Toulouse. From Italy take the A8 and A7 or the A43 to Lyon, which is where the A72 and A71 head north to Bourges and Orléans. From anywhere in Germany, the quickest way to get to the Loire Valley is via Paris.

In high season, the motorways get crowded and, if you have time, it may be worth taking more minor (and more attractive) roads. Try not to travel over the first and last weekends in July and August, when thousands of holiday-makers are on the roads.

USING THE AUTOROUTE TOLL

When you join an autoroute, take a ticket from the machine. This identifies your starting point on the autoroute. You do not pay until you reach an exit tollbooth. Charges are made according to the distance travelled and the type of vehicle.



Motorway Sign

These signs indicate the name and distance to the next toll-booth. They are usually blue and white; some show the various tariff rates for cars, motorbikes, caravans and large trucks.



Tollbooth with Attendant

When you hand in your ticket at a staffed toll-booth, the attendant tells you the cost of your journey on the autoroute and the price will be displayed. You can pay with coins, notes or credit cards. A receipt is issued on request.



Automatic Machine

On reaching the exit tollbooth, insert your ticket into the machine and the price of your journey will be displayed in euros. You can pay either with coins or by credit card. The machine will give change and can issue a receipt.

CAR HIRE

It is worth contacting a number of car-hire firms before you go, as there are often special offers if you pre-pay or book online. Other options include fly-drive packages, and the train and car-hire deals from the SNCF, with collection from main stations.

For non-EU residents planning to drive for more than three weeks, the best option may be the short-term purchase and buy-back service offered by Peugeot and Renault.



Three of the most widely available car-hire firms in the Loire Valley

RULES OF THE ROAD

Remember to drive on the right. The *priorité à droite* rule also applies, which means that you must give way to any vehicle coming out of a side turning on the right, unless signposting indicates otherwise. However, the *priorité à droite* rule no longer applies at roundabouts, so give way to cars already on the roundabout.

Seat belts are compulsory for both front and back seats. Overtaking when there is a single solid centre line is heavily penalized.

Be aware that instant fines are issued for speeding and drink-driving.



No entry for any vehicles



One-way system



Give way at roundabouts



Right of way ends, give way to right



One of the motorways in the Loire Valley region

FAST THROUGH ROUTES

There are three main motorways in the Loire Valley: the A11 (*L'Océane*) from Nantes to Chartres via Angers; the A10 (*L'Aquitaine*) from Tours to Orléans via Blois; and the A71 from Orléans to Bourges. There are police stations at motorway exits.

COUNTRY ROUTES

One of the pleasures of touring the Loire Valley is turning off the main routes onto small country roads. The RN and D (*Route Nationale* and *Départementale*) roads are often a good alternative to motorways.

The *Bison futé* ("crafty bison") signs will indicate alternative routes to avoid heavy traffic, and are particularly helpful during the French holiday periods, which are appropriately known as the *grands départs*. The worst weekends are in mid-July, and at the beginning and end of August when the French holidays start and finish.

SPEED LIMITS

The speed limits in the Loire Valley are as follows:

- **Toll motorways** 130 km/h (80 mph) in dry weather, 110 km/h (68 mph) when it rains;
- **Dual carriageways and non-toll motorways** 110 km/h (68 mph), 100 km/h (60 mph) in the rain; 50 km/h (30 mph) in towns;
- **Other roads** 90 km/h (56 mph), 80 km/h (50 mph) in the rain;
- In **towns** 50 km/h (30 mph).
- In **fog**, 50 km/h (30 mph).

MAPS

The best general maps of the Loire Valley are the orange Michelin regional maps (No. 517 for the Pays de la Loire and No. 518 for Centre). **IGN** (*Institut Géographique National*) also produces two good touring maps covering this area: Central France (R08) and Pays de la Loire (R07).

Town plans are usually provided free by local tourist offices. In large towns you may need a more detailed map, and these are published by Michelin or **Blay-Foldex**. In the UK, **Stanfords** in London is famous for its range of maps.



Some of the available maps of the Loire Valley

PETROL (GASOLINE)

Petrol (*essence*) is relatively expensive in France, especially on *autoroutes*. Large supermarkets and hypermarkets sell petrol at a discount.

Many petrol stations in France tend to be self-service (*libre service*), but if an attendant is on duty, it may be helpful to know that *faire le plein* means "to fill up the tank".

Petrol stations in France sell unleaded petrol (*sans plomb*) and diesel (*gazole* or *gasoil*). Leaded petrol is no longer available, though some stations offer lead-replacement petrol (*Super ARS*) or a lead-substitute additive. LPG gas is now widely available. A list on the French Government Tourist Office website (see p231) indicates petrol stations selling LPG gas in the region.



An *horodateur*, or pay-and-display parking meter

PARKING REGULATIONS

Parking in the large towns is strictly regulated. If you are illegally parked, you may be towed away instantly to the police pound and face a stiff fine. Loire Valley towns now have pay-and-display machines (*boro-dateurs*). Many towns offer free parking from noon to 2pm, overnight (usually 7pm–9am), and all day on Sundays and public holidays.

Even if you are legally parked, it is possible that you will find yourself hemmed in when you return: the French usually honk their horns to attract the guilty party.

COACH AND BUS TRAVEL

Eurolines operates coach services on Wednesdays and Fridays from London to Tours, Angers and Nantes. The journey to Nantes takes around 13 hours and is an expensive option compared to a flight with one of the discount airlines.

Local buses operate from most towns' *gare routière*, which is often located near the train station (*gare SNCF*).

Although the bus service in the Loire Valley region is relatively good, timetables in many rural areas tend to be geared towards the needs of schoolchildren and people going to work, or around market days. As a result, morning departures tend to be very early and the service may not run on a daily basis.

For more information on bus routes and timetables, contact local town halls or tourist information offices.

TAXIS

Prices for taxis tend to vary from one part of the region to another. The charges, predictably, are highest in the busy tourist areas. The pick-up charge is usually around 4€, and 1€ or more for every kilometre. An extra charge will be made for any luggage. All taxis must use a meter (*compteur*).

Hailing a taxi is not customary in the Loire Valley – you must go to a taxi rank or book a car over the phone.



A taxi meter showing the fare, or *prix à payer*

HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking in France is legal except on motorways, though it is possible to hitch from one service station to another. A safer option is to use

Allostop, an organization that puts you in touch with cars travelling in France and Europe. After paying an initial fee, which is determined by the length of the trip, hitchhikers pay the driver a fixed rate per kilometre, which includes petrol costs and motorway tolls. The organization keeps records of drivers' and hitchhikers' details for security reasons.

DIRECTORY

CAR RENTAL

Avis

UK **Tel** 0870 100 287.
France **Tel** 0820 050505.
Nantes **Tel** 0820 611 676.
Orléans **Tel** 02 38 62 27 04.
www.avis.fr

Budget

UK **Tel** 0871 539 170.
France **Tel** 0825 00 35 64.
www.budget.fr

Europcar

UK **Tel** 0870 607 50 00.
France **Tel** 0825 358 358.
Orléans **Tel** 02 38 73 00 40.
Nantes **Tel** 02 40 47 19 38.
www.europcar.com

Hertz

UK **Tel** 0870 44 88 44.
France **Tel** 0825 861 861.
www.hertz.com

National/Citer

UK **Tel** 0870 400 45 52.
France **Tel** 0825 16 12 12.
www.nationalcar.fr

TRAFFIC INFORMATION

Autoroutes

Tel 0892 70 26 34.
www.autoroutes.fr

Bison Futé (other roads)

Tel 0826 02 20 22 (French only).

MAPS

Espace IGN

107 rue la Boétie,
75008 Paris.
Tel 01 43 98 85 00.
www.ign.fr

Stanfords

12–14 Long Acre,
London WC2E 9LP.
Tel (020) 7836 1321.
www.stanfords.co.uk

HITCHHIKING SERVICE

Allostop

Paris **Tel** 01 53 20 42 42.
www.allostop.net

COACH TRAVEL

Eurolines

UK **Tel** 0870 514 32 19.
France **Tel** 08 92 899 091.
www.eurolines.com

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Acknowledgments

Dorling Kindersley would like to thank the following people whose assistance contributed to the preparation of this book.

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Special Assistance

Mme Barthez, Château d'Angers; M Sylvain Bellenger, Château de Blois; Tiphanie Blot, Loire-Atlantique Tourisme; M Bertrand Bourdin, France Télécom; M Jean-Paul and Mme Caroline Chaslus, Abbaye de Fontevraud; M Joël Clavier, Conseil Général du Loiret; Mme Dominique Féquet, Office de Tourisme, Saumur; Katia Forêt, Nantes Tourisme; M Gaston Huet, Vouvray; Mme Pascale Humbert, Comité Départemental du Tourisme de l'Anjou; M Alain Irlandes and Mme Guylaine Fisher, Atelier Patrimoine, Tours; Mme Sylvie Lacroix and M Paul Lichtenberg, Comité Régional du Tourisme, Nantes; M André Margotin, Comité Départemental du Tourisme du Cher; M Jean Méré, Champigny-sur-Veude, Touraine; Séverine Michau, Comité Régional du Tourisme Centre; Mme Marie-France de Peyronnet, Route Jacques-Cœur, Berry; M R Pinard, L'École des Ponts et Chaussées, Paris; Virginie Priou, Comité Régional du Tourisme des Pays de la Loire; Véronique Richard, Vallée du Loir; Père Rocher, Abbaye de Solesmes; M Loïc Rousseau, Rédacteur, Vallée du Loir; M Pierre Saboureaud, Lochois; Bertrand Sachet, Fédération Régionale de Randonnée Pédestre, Indre; M de Sauveboeuf, Le Plessis-Bourré; M Antoine Selosse and M Frank Artiges, Comité Départemental du Tourisme de Touraine; Mme Sabine Sévrin, Comité Régional du Tourisme, Orléans; Mme Tissier de Mallerai, Château de Talcy.

Photography Permissions

Dorling Kindersley would like to thank the following for their assistance and kind permission to photograph at their establishments: M François Bonneau, Conservateur, Château de Valençay; M Nicolas de Brissac, Château de Brissac; Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites; Conseil Général du Cher; Marquis and Marquise de Contades, Château de Montgeoffroy; M Robert de Goulaine, Château de Goulaine; Mme Jallier, Office de Tourisme, Puy-du-Fou; Château de Montsoreau, Propriété du Département de Maine-et-Loire; Musée Historique et Archéologique de l'Orléanais; M Jean-Pierre Ramboz, Sacristain, Cathédrale de Tours; M Bernard Voisin, Conservateur, Château de Chenonceau and all other churches, museums, hotels, restaurants, shops and sights too numerous to thank individually.

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Phrase Book

In Emergency

Help!	Au secours!	oh sekoor
Stop!	Arrêtez!	aret- ay
Call a doctor!	Appelez un médecin!	apuh- lay uñ medsañ
Call an ambulance!	Appelez une ambulance!	apuh- lay oon oñboo-loñs
Call the police!	Appelez la police!	apuh- lay lah poh-lees
Call the fire brigade!	Appelez les pompiers!	apuh-lay leh poñ-peeyay
Where is the nearest telephone?	Où est le téléphone le plus proche?	oo ay luh tehlefon luh ploo prosh
Where is the nearest hospital?	Où est l'hôpital le plus proche?	oo ay l' opectal luh ploo prosh

Communication Essentials

Yes	Oui	wee
No	Non	noñ
Please	S'il vous plaît	seel voo play
Thank you	Merci	mer- see
Excuse me	Excusez-moi	exkoo- zay mwah
Hello	Bonjour	boñ zhoor
Goodbye	Au revoir	oh ruh- vwar
Good night	Bonsoir	boñ- swar
Morning	Le matin	matañ
Afternoon	L'après-midi	l'apreh- meedee
Evening	Le soir	swar
Yesterday	Hier	ee yehr
Today	Aujourd'hui	oh-zhoor- dwee
Tomorrow	Demain	duh mañ
Here	Ici	ee- see
There	Là	lah
What?	Quel, quelle?	kel, kel
When?	Quand?	koñ
Why?	Pourquoi?	poor- kwah
Where?	Où?	oo

Useful Phrases

How are you?	Comment allez-vous?	kom-moñ talay voo
Very well, thank you.	Très bien, merci.	treh byañ, mer- see
Pleased to meet you.	Enchanté de faire votre connaissance.	oñshoñ- tay duh fehr votr kon-ay-sans
See you soon.	A bientôt.	Ah byañ- toh
That's fine	Voilà qui est parfait	vwalah kee ay parfay
Where is/are...?	Où est/sont...?	oo ay/soñ
How far is it to...?	Combien de kilomètres d'ici à...?	kom- byañ duh keelo-metr d'ici à...?
Which way to...?	Quelle est la direction pour...?	kel ay lah deer-ek-syoñ poor
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais?	par- lay voo oñg-lay
I'm sorry.	Excusez-moi.	exkoo- zay mwah
I don't understand.	Je ne comprends pas.	zhuh nuh kom- proñ pah

Could you speak slowly please?	Pouvez-vous parler moins vite s'il vous plaît?	poo- vay voo par-lay mwañ veet seel voo play
--------------------------------	---	---

Useful Words

big	grand	groñ
small	petit	puh- tee
hot	chaud	show
cold	froid	frwah
good	bon	boñ
bad	mauvais	moh- veh
enough	assez	assay
well	bien	byañ
open	ouvert	oo- ver
closed	fermé	fer- meh
left	gauche	gohsh
right	droite	drwah
straight on	tout droit	too drwah
near	près	preh
far	loin	lwañ
up	en haut	oñ oh
down	en bas	oñ bah
early	de bonne heure	duh bon urr
late	en retard	oñ ruh- tar
entrance	l'entrée	l'on- tray
exit	la sortie	sor- tee
toilet	les toilettes, les WC	twah -let, vay-see
free, unoccupied	libre	leebr
free, no charge	gratuit	grah- twee

Making a Telephone Call

I'd like to place a long-distance call.	Je voudrais faire un interurbain.	zhuh voo-dreh fehrũ añter-oorbañ
I'd like to make a reverse charge call.	Je voudrais faire une communication PCV.	zhuh voo- dreh fehr oon syoñ komoonikah-peh-seh-veh
I'll try again later.	Je rappellerai plus tard.	zhuh rapel- eray ploo tar
Can I leave a message?	Est-ce que je peux laisser un message?	es- keh zhuh puh leh- say uñ mehsazh
Hold on.	Ne quittez pas, s'il vous plaît.	nuh kee- tay pah seel voo play
Could you speak up a little please?	Pouvez-vous parler un peu plus fort?	poo- vay voo par-lay uñ puh ploo for
local call	la communication locale	komoonikah- syoñ loh- kal

Shopping

How much does this cost?	C'est combien s'il vous plaît?	say kom- byañ seel voo play
I would like ...	je voudrais...	zhuh voo- dray
Do you have?	Est-ce que vous avez?	es- kuh voo zavay

I'm just looking.	Je regarde seulement.	zhuh ruhgar suhlmoñ
Do you take credit cards?	Est-ce que vous acceptez les cartes de crédit?	es-kuh voo zaksept-ay leh kart duh kreh-dec
Do you take traveller's cheques?	Est-ce que vous acceptez les chèques de voyage?	es-kuh voo zaksept-ay leh shek duh vwayyazh
What time do you open?	A quelle heure vous êtes ouvert?	ah kel urr voo zet oo-ver
What time do you close?	A quelle heure vous êtes fermé?	ah kel urr voo zet fer-may
This one.	Celui-ci.	suhl-wee-see
That one.	Celui-là.	suhl-wee-lah
expensive	cher	shehr
cheap	pas cher, bon marché	pah shehr, boñ mar-shay
size, clothes	la taille	tye
size, shoes	la peinture	pwañ-tur
white	blanc	bloñ
black	noir	nwahr
red	rouge	roozh
yellow	jaune	zhohwn
green	vert	vehr
blue	bleu	bluh

Types of Shop

antique shop	le magasin d'antiquités	maga-zañ d'oñteekce-tay
bakery	la boulangerie	booloñ-zhurec
bank	la banque	boñk
book shop	la librairie	lee-brechree
butcher	la boucherie	boo-shechree
cake shop	la pâtisserie	patee-sreec
cheese shop	la fromagerie	fromazh-reec
chemist	la pharmacie	farmah-see
dairy	la crèmerie	krem-reec
department store	le grand magasin	groñ maga-zañ
delicatessen	la charcuterie	sharkoot-reec
fishmonger	la poissonnerie	pwasson-reec
gift shop	le magasin de cadeaux	maga-zañ duh kadoh
greengrocer	le marchand de légumes	mar-shoñ duh lay-goom
grocery	l'alimentation	alee-moñta-syoñ
hairdresser	le coiffeur	kwafuhr
market	le marché	marsh-ay
newsagent	le magasin de journaux	maga-zañ duh zhoor-no
post office	la poste, le bureau de poste,	pohst, booroh duh pohst,
shoe shop	le PTT, le magasin de chaussures	peh-teh-teh maga-zañ duh show-soor
supermarket	le supermarché	soo pehr-marshay
tobacconist	le tabac	tabah
travel agent	l'agence de voyages	l'azhoñ duh vwayyazh

Sightseeing

abbey	l'abbaye	l'abay-ee
art gallery	le galerie d'art	galer-reec dart
bus station	la gare routière	gahr roo-tee-yehr
cathedral	la cathédrale	katay-dral
church	l'église	l'aygleez
garden	le jardin	zhar-dañ
library	la bibliothèque	beeb-leeco-tek
museum	le musée	moo-zay
railway station	la gare (SNCF)	gahr (es-en-say-ef)
tourist	les renseignements touristiques, le syndicat d'initiative	roñsayn-moñ too-rees-teeck, sandee-ka d'eenec-syateecv
information	l'hôtel de ville	l'ohotel duh veel
office	l'hôtel particulier	l'ohotel duh veel partikoo-lyay
town hall	fermeture	fehmech-tur
private mansion	jour férié	zhoor fehree-ay
closed for public holiday		

Staying in a Hotel

Do you have a vacant room?	Est-ce que vous avez une chambre?	es-kuh voo-zavay oon shambr
double room	la chambre à deux personnes	shambr ah duh pehr-son
with double bed	avec un grand lit	avek un gronñ lee
twin room	la chambre à deux lits	shambr ah duh lee
single room	la chambre à une personne	shambr ah oon pehr-son
room with a bath, shower	la chambre avec salle de bains, une douche	shambr avek sal duh bañ, oon doosh
porter	le garçon	gar-soñ
key	la clef	klay
I have a reservation.	J'ai fait une réservation.	zhay fay oon rayzehrva-syoñ

Eating Out

Have you got a table?	Avez-vous une table libre?	away-voov oon tahbl leebr
I want to reserve a table.	Je voudrais réserver une table.	zhuh voo-dray rayzehr-vay oon tahbl
The bill please.	L'addition s'il vous plaît.	l'adee-syoñ seel voo play
I am a vegetarian.	Je suis végétarien.	zhuh swee vezhay-tehryañ
Waitress/waiter	Madame, Mademoiselle/Monsieur	mah-dam, mah-demwahzel/ muh-syuh
menu	le menu, la carte	men-oo, kart
fixed-price menu	le menu à prix fixe	men-oo ah pree feeks
cover charge	le couvert	koo-vehr
wine list	la carte des vins	kart-deh vañ
glass	le verre	vehr
bottle	la bouteille	boo-tay
knife	le couteau	koo-toh
fork	la fourchette	for-shet

spoon	la cuillère	kwee-yehr
breakfast	le petit déjeuner	puh-tec deh-zhuh-nay
lunch	le déjeuner	deh-zhuh-nay
dinner	le dîner	dee-nay
main course	le plat principal	plah prañsee-pal
starter, first course	l'entrée, le hors-d'œuvre	l'oh-tray, or-duhvr
dish of the day	le plat du jour	plah doo zhoor
wine bar	le bar à vin	bar ah vañ
café	le café	ka-fay
rare	saignant	say-noñ
medium	à point	ah pwañ
well done	bien cuit	byañ kwee

Menu Decoder

l'agneau	l'anyoh	lamb
l'ail	l'eye	garlic
la banane	banan	banana
le beurre	burr	butter
la bière	bee-yehr	beer
la bière à la pression	bee-yehr ah lah pres-syoñ	draught beer
le bifteck, le steak	beef-tec, stek	steak
le bœuf	buhf	beef
bouilli	boo-yee	boiled
le café	kah-fay	coffee
le canard	kanar	duck
le chocolat	shoko-lah	chocolate
le citron	see-troñ	lemon
le citron pressé	see-troñ pres-eh	fresh lemon juice
les crevettes	kruh-vet	prawns
les crustacés	kroos-ta-say	shellfish
cuit au four	kweet oh foor	baked
le dessert	deh-ser	dessert
l'eau minérale	l'oh meeney-ral	mineral water
les escargots	leh zes-kar-goh	snails
les frites	freet	chips
le fromage	from-azh	cheese
le fruit frais	frwee freh	fresh fruit
les fruits de mer	frwee duh mer	seafood
le gâteau	gah-toh	cake
la glace	glas	ice, ice cream
grillé	gree-yay	grilled
le homard	omahr	lobster
l'huile	l'weel	oil
le jambon	zhoñ-boñ	ham
le lait	leh	milk
les légumes	lay-goom	vegetables
la moutarde	moo-tard	mustard
l'œuf	l'uf	egg
les oignons	leh zonyoñ	onions
les olives	leh zoleev	olives
l'orange	l'oroñzh	orange
l'orange pressée	l'oroñzh pres-eh	fresh orange juice
le pain	pan	bread
le petit pain	puh-tec pañ	roll
poché	posh-ay	poached
le poisson	pwah-ssoñ	fish
le poivre	pwavr	pepper
la pomme	pom	apple

les pommes de terre	pom-duh teh	potatoes
le porc	por	pork
le potage	poh-tazh	soup
le poulet	poo-lay	chicken
le riz	ree	rice
rôti	row-tec	roast
la sauce	sohs	sauce
la saucisse	sohssecs	sausage, fresh
sec	sek	dry
le sel	sel	salt
la soupe	soop	soup
le sucre	sookr	sugar
le thé	tay	tea
le toast	toast	toast
la viande	vee-yand	meat
le vin blanc	vañ bloñ	white wine
le vin rouge	vañ roozh	red wine
le vinaigre	veenaygr	vinegar

Numbers

0	zéro	zeh-roh
1	un, une	uñ, oon
2	deux	duh
3	trois	trwah
4	quatre	katr
5	cinq	sañk
6	six	sees
7	sept	set
8	huit	weet
9	neuf	nerf
10	dix	dees
11	onze	oñz
12	douze	dooz
13	treize	trehz
14	quatorze	katorz
15	quinze	kañz
16	seize	sehzh
17	dix-sept	dees-set
18	dix-huit	dees-weet
19	dix-neuf	dees-nerf
20	vingt	vañ
30	trente	tront
40	quarante	karoñt
50	cinquante	sañkoñt
60	soixante	swasoñt
70	soixante-dix	swasoñt-dees
80	quatre-vingts	katr-vañ
90	quatre-vingts-dix	katr-vañ-dees
100	cent	soñ
1,000	mille	meel










Time

one minute	une minute	oon mee-noot
one hour	une heure	oon urr
half an hour	une demi-heure	oon duh-mee urr
Monday	lundi	luñ-dee
Tuesday	mardi	mar-dee
Wednesday	mercredi	mehrkruh-dee
Thursday	jeudi	zhuh-dee
Friday	vendredi	voñdruh-dee
Saturday	samedi	sam-dee
Sunday	dimanche	dee-moñsh

Road Map of the Loire Valley



KEY

-  Airport
-  Ferry service
-  Train station
-  Area covered by this guide
-  Railroad line
-  Motorway/ Motorway characteristics
-  Major road
-  Minor road
-  Departmental boundary

0 kilometres 25
0 miles 25



D

E

F

1

2

3

4

5

D

E

F