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Chateaux of the Loire Trail

Weight limit: 90 kilos

Nearest airport: Tours/Paris

8 days / 7 nights / 6 days riding



The great castles of the Loire Valley are arguably among the finest legacies history has left us. Chenonceau, Cheverny, and Chaumont are outstanding examples of the tremendous flowering of French culture and can be visited on this seven night trail ride starting in Montrichard and ending in Pontlevoy. You will journey across the Loire Valley, stopping at its majestic renaissance castles en route. Beautiful scenery, responsive horses and great food and wine, this is the ideal trail for lovers of French history, culture and architecture.

The Riding

The pace on this trail is varied to suit the terrain with long periods of walk and plenty of opportunities to canter and gallop. The scenery encompasses rolling hills, green, sun-drenched vineyards, woods and forests. Riders must be comfortable in all paces and happy to do some fast riding in open spaces on an obedient and responsive horse. Riders need to be in good physical condition, you will be in the saddle for between 4-6 hours per day.

Guides & Group sizes

As well as being experienced horsemen and women, your guides on this trail have a thorough knowledge of local history. All guides are multilingual French/English and the group size is between 5-10.



Horses and Tack

The horses are pure or cross-bred Arabian or Thoroughbreds and warmbloods varying in height from 15.2hh to 17hh. The horses are exceptionally well-schooled and good-mannered at this destination and many of them have been bred and trained by your hosts themselves. The tack used is specialist trail riding saddles and you will be provided with saddlebags, a rain poncho,

and a water bottle. Horses are ridden in Myler bits which help to facilitate effective communication between horse and rider and a relaxed and happy horse. Helmets are not mandatory but are strongly recommended.

Accommodation & Dining

Accommodation on this trail is in small, charming hotels or guesthouses, nestled into the rural surroundings. You'll stay in a different location each night of the trail, some have swimming pools. Most of the rooms will have an en suite bathroom although this cannot be guaranteed. Rooms are twins or doubles although single rooms are available for a supplement. The luggage is transported in the support vehicle and transferred to each accommodation so you only need to carry daily essentials in your saddle bags.



Continental breakfasts are served at your hotel each morning typically consisting of a hot drink (tea, coffee, hot chocolate), juice, breakfast pastries (croissant, pain au chocolat, pain aux raisins), bread, butter and jam, and sometimes yogurt. Lunches are traditional french pique-niques, expect fresh baguettes, sumptuous cheeses, salads and tasty charcuterie, along

with a bottle of something local. Dinner will be typical French fare comprising several courses of regional specialities. Please note that wine is not included with dinners.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive at Montrichard train station to meet your fellow riders and hosts. Transfer to the hotel for dinner and overnight where you can discuss the upcoming trail with the rest of the group.

Day 2

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before meeting the horses. This morning's ride takes you toward the village of Fougères-sur-Bièvre where a delicious lunch awaits you at the foot of the village's 15th century castle. In the afternoon you will ride on to the beautifully furnished chateau of Cheverny, they'll be time to step inside and admire the castle's architecture. This historic castle has been owned by the same family for seven centuries.

Day 3

After breakfast, ride towards Chambord, the largest castle in the Loire area and a unique architectural jewel set in an extensive natural forest reserve of over 10,000 acres. Enjoy a lengthy picnic lunch and spend the afternoon visiting the castle before riding on to the 16th century castle of Villesavin castle, considered one of the best-preserved in the region.

Day 4

Today you will ride through the forest of Chambord to the castle of Beauregard where you can enjoy a freshly prepared picnic lunch. The castle was a former hunting lodge of Chambord and is famous for its hundreds of portraits of well-known characters from French history. There will be time to visit the castle before riding on to Candé-dur-Beuvron. Dinner and overnight at a local hotel.

Day 5

Today you'll set off on a leisurely morning ride along the banks of the Loire river, heading towards the village of Chaumont-sur-Loire, granted UNESCO World Heritage status thanks to its impressive 15th century fortress. Following a picnic lunch close to the castle, there will be time to visit before enjoying a short ride across the Sudais forest in order to reach your hotel for the night.

Day 6

Today you will travel further along the Loire river, passing many small beaches until you reach Amboise where you will stop for today's picnic and can visit the castle. The 15th century was a time of great wealth for Amboise with the French kings of the time all adding to the embellishment of the castle. In the afternoon, you'll cross the forest of Amboise to reach Saint Martin le Beau where your host family, which manages the hotel and the family restaurant, will treat you to a tasting of their wines. Dinner and overnight at hotel.



Day 7

After breakfast, ride down into the Cher Valley, where you can enjoy some long canters along the banks of the river until you reach the magnificent 16th century castle of Chenonceau. Indulge in a final picnic lunch in the grounds and a short visit to the castle before heading back to the town of Pontlevoy for your final night.

Day 8

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the train station for onward travel or to make your way home.

International flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please arrange to arrive at Montrichard train station in time for the group transfer at 18.30 on Day 1. Train station transfers cost €20 return per person and are payable on arrival in cash.

What to bring

- Riding hat
- Jodhpurs or other comfortable trousers
- Riding boots
- T-shirts and long-sleeved shirts
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses
- Warm layers - At times the evening temperature drops significantly
- Casual clothes & shoes for evening
- Raincoat
- Insect repellent
- Sun cream
- Camera
- A copy of your passport

Climate

Spring and autumn are mild and summers pleasantly hot. Rainfall is generally low but showers can occur at any time of year.

Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.

Travel documents

For entry requirements to France for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.



Currency & Tipping

The local currency in France is the Euro. We recommend bringing enough local currency for any additional drinks you may want to purchase as well as entrance fees to the castles.

Tipping is common when eating and drinking in France. Tipping your guide is at your discretion, gratuities are greatly appreciated.

Riding declaration

"I am an experienced rider and able to mount & dismount unaided. I have a firm seat and I'm confident and in control at all paces (including rising trot, light seat canters and gallops) and have a good level of current riding fitness. I do not suffer from any illness or disability that could prejudice my safety or that of others."

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms

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Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.

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