

Châteaux and Gardens of the Loire Valley



Trip style:
European walking holidays

Destination:
📍 France

Walking Grade
1

Carbon Footprint:
🌿 175kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

The Loire Valley is known as 'The Garden of France' and it's easy to see why. Explore the region's finest gardens and châteaux, from the elegant riverside planting of Chenonceau to the imaginative displays on show at Chaumont-sur-Loire's International Garden Festival. Stroll the flower-filled streets of Chédigny, visit the bountiful vegetable plots of Les Jardins de Puygirault, and step into the Renaissance-era at Clos Lucé, where Leonardo da Vinci spent his final years indulging in his passion for nature and botany. Guided by an expert horticulturist, you'll gain a fascinating insight into the rich history and inspiring designs of the Loire's UNESCO-listed garden landscapes.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Learn about Leonardo da Vinci and his love of gardening and innovation at Château du Clos Lucé, where he spent his final years
- Stroll around Chédigny, a flower-filled village awarded the prestigious *Remarkable Garden* label for the past five years
- Visit Château de Chenonceau, one of the Loire's most iconic châteaux, admired as much for its elegant gardens as for its remarkable setting over the River Cher
- Enjoy a visit to Jardin du Puygirault, a beautifully curated kitchen garden showcasing more than 1,000 varieties of plants

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- Experience the International Garden Festival at Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire, where imaginative contemporary planting and landscape design take centre stage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return rail travel via Eurostar from London St Pancras to Paris
- Regional rail travel from Paris to Tours
- Fully escorted travel and excursions with a Horticultural Specialist Tour Manager
- All transport to and from sites of interest
- 6 nights' at the 3-star Best Western Plus l'Artist Hotel, Tours
- 6 breakfasts & 6 dinners
- All entrance fees, guided visits and tastings as per the itinerary, including château and garden visits, a guided tour of Chédigny and the Priest's Garden, plus a cave tour and wine tasting.

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 By rail to Tours

We depart from London St Pancras International on the morning Eurostar service to Paris Gare du Nord. From here, we transfer to Gare Montparnasse for the TGV to Saint-Pierre-des-Corps, then continue to our hotel in Tours, our base for the week.

Day 2 Jardin du Puygirault and Château de Villandry

This morning, we visit Jardin du Puygirault for a guided tour of this fascinating garden of plants and rural life. With more than 1,000 species arranged across a series of themed plots, it offers a wonderful insight into traditional growing methods, heritage varieties, and the close relationship between people, plants, and the seasons. Later, we continue to Château de Villandry, one of the Loire Valley's most celebrated garden estates, admired for its elegant Renaissance château and beautifully restored formal gardens.

Day 3 Clos Lucé and the Royal Château of Amboise

After breakfast, we head to Château du Clos Lucé, Leonardo da Vinci's final home. Here, the château, park, and galleries bring his extraordinary imagination to life, offering a rewarding blend of art, science, nature, and design. Later, we visit the Royal Château of Amboise, dramatically positioned above the Loire. One of the great royal residences of the French Renaissance, it combines sweeping views, rich history, and the chapel traditionally associated with Leonardo da Vinci.

Day 4 Chaumont-sur-Loire International Garden Festival

Today is devoted to Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire, home to the renowned International Garden Festival. Since 1992, the festival has been a showcase for contemporary garden and landscape design, with imaginative displays that surprise and inspire at every turn. We'll also have time to enjoy the estate's permanent gardens at Prés du Gouloup, where creative planting and wide-ranging influences make this one of the Loire's most distinctive garden visits.

Day 5 Château de Chenonceau and Chédigny

This morning, we visit the iconic Château de Chenonceau, admired as much for its elegant gardens as for its remarkable setting across the River Cher. From formal planting and floral displays to peaceful pathways and beautifully kept grounds, it is one of the Loire's most memorable estates. Later, we travel to Chédigny, the only village in France to have been awarded the Remarkable Garden label. Accompanied by a local guide, we explore its flower-filled streets and visit the peaceful Presbytery Garden, known for its decorative, aromatic, medicinal, and kitchen garden planting.

Day 6 Free time in Tours and Château de Valmer

This morning is free to relax or explore Tours at your own pace. In the early afternoon, we head to Château de Valmer, an elegant estate where Italian Renaissance-inspired terraced gardens, vineyards, and a rare troglodytic chapel come together in one remarkable setting. Our visit includes a guided tour of the gardens and chapel, followed by a guided tour of the caves and a wine tasting – a fitting finale to our Loire Valley garden journey.

Day 7 Return to London

We transfer to Saint-Pierre-des-Corps station for our return rail journey via Paris to London, arriving later this afternoon

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 1

Short, easy walks on level paths with no stiles. Ideal for relaxed walking and active sightseeing. Typically, 2-3 miles (3-5km) or less, with little if any ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Best Western Plus L'Artist Hotel, Tours

The 3-star Best Western Plus L'Artist Hotel offers 53 comfortable, air-conditioned rooms with contemporary décor, complimentary Wi-Fi, a flatscreen TV and tea and coffee-making facilities. Hotel facilities include a lounge bar, terrace and fitness room, while all floors are served by a lift.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see whether any health precautions are needed for your trip. Health advice and requirements can change, so we recommend doing this in good time before travel.

As a general rule, travellers should ensure they are up to date with routine UK vaccinations and boosters, including, for example, MMR and diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Some countries may require you to have specific vaccinations such as Malaria, Rabies and Yellow Fever. Please check with your GP if you are unsure.

Please note that the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is restricted or banned in certain countries. If you will be carrying medication, you should check with the relevant embassy or consulate before travelling. As an extra precaution, we recommend keeping medication in its original packaging, carrying a copy of your prescription, and, where possible, asking your pharmacist to provide the medication name in the language of the country you are visiting.

For further country-specific health advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk. If you are travelling from outside the UK, please consult your own doctor and check local entry requirements.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice.

Passport Requirements

This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long.

We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues.

If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website.

Visa Requirements

Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling.

British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website:

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Italian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

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- Rubbish bags
 - Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>

Drinking Water

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Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

Document produced: 16 October 2026

