



Loire Valley and Paris Garden Tour

10 days

Tour Description

The chateaux of the rich, powerful and royal dot the land of the Loire Valley. From magnificent architecture, to beautiful gardens and stained glass windows, each chateau has something to charm and delight visitors. Learn about the inhabitants who once dwelled in these mini castles in a society bound by complicated social rules and manners. A short distance away the City of Lights awaits with its elegant boulevards and shops. Nearby is the ultimate castle, the Palace of Versailles from which the Sun Kings radiated power upon the nation and at Giverny, Monet soaked up an environment that inspired him to create one of the most famous works of art the world has ever seen.

Highlights

- ❖ Explore Chartres Cathedral famous for its medieval stained glass.
- ❖ View the unique Pagoda of Chanteloup, whimsy of a French Duke
- ❖ River cruise to view the Chateau Chenonceau
- ❖ Wine tasting at Domaine du Croc due Merle
- ❖ Visits to multiple chateaus and a two-night chateau stay
- ❖ Inhale the scents of over 400 types of roses at Les Jardins de Roquelin
- ❖ Visit to Monet's house at Giverny
- ❖ Half-day tour of Palace of Versailles

Sample Tour Itinerary

Blois – 4 nights

Day 1: Arrive Blois

Upon arrival Paris you will be met by your tour escort. The group's private coach will then whisk you away to begin your journey through the Loire Valley. On the way to the Loire Valley, the group will enjoy a stop in Chartres with free time to explore the famous Chartres Cathedral. The cathedral is considered one of the finest examples in all France of the Gothic style of architecture. After many incarnations over the centuries, the latest version was dedicated in 1260 by King Louis IX. It is said to constitute one of the most complete collections of medieval stained glass in the world. After, continue on to your hotel. Tonight the group will have a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 2:

After breakfast you will depart for a full day tour in the Loire region. The first stop will be Le Pagode de Chanteloup in Amboise. Amboise lies on the banks of the Loire River. Today a small market town, it was once home of the French royal court. Just outside of the city is the Pagode de Chanteloup, a 44 meter tall Chinese Pagoda built in 1775 by the Duke of Choiseul. The Pagoda is seven levels high, with each level slightly smaller than the last one. After free time for lunch, the group will embark on a short river boat cruise on the River Cher where you will view the magnificent Chateau Chenonceau. Tonight you are free to enjoy dinner on your own.



Day 3:

Morning at your leisure, later you will depart on an afternoon tour. The tour begins with a stop at the grand Chateau Chambord for a photo op. Chambord is the largest chateau in the Loire valley and boasts very distinctive French Renaissance architecture. Next the group will visit Chateau de Talcy, which was commissioned in 1520 by Bernardo Salviati, a Florentine banker with connections to the Medici family. Late this afternoon you will delight in a visit and wine tasting at the Domaine du Croc du Merle.

Day 4:

After breakfast the group will set out via private coach for the heavenly La Chatonniere Garden with a charming castle that dates back to the middle ages, it is surrounded by 12 terraced gardens. After free time for lunch, you will explore Chateau de Villandry and its gardens. The 16th century chateau was the last of the large manor homes built in the Loire Valley during the Renaissance. Wander in the Italian Renaissance style gardens. Tonight you are free to enjoy dinner on your own.

Chateau stay – 2 nights

Day 5:

Today will be dedicated to the Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire and its landscaped park, a historic chateau once occupied by Catherine de Medici and visited by Nostradamus. This venue also hosts the unique Arts and Nature Center which includes over 40 panels of stained glass installed in some of the chateau's apartments. After our visit we will transfer to the beautiful chateau that the group will be staying at for two nights.

Day 6:

The group will depart on a full day tour after breakfast. This morning you will visit the charming Les Jardins de Roquelin. This small English garden exemplifies varieties of roses and perennials mixed in various arrangements. You'll see 400 varieties of roses, 150 varieties of perennials and 50 varieties of shrubs. The afternoon will be spent in the city of Orleans, where you can enjoy lunch at your leisure and visit historic sites like Joan of Arc's house.

Paris – 3 nights

Day 7:

Today the group will take the scenic ride from the Loire Valley to Paris. Upon arrival the group is free to enjoy the afternoon at leisure. The "City of Lights" boasts great monuments, famous museums, gardens and elegant shops that line the chic boulevards.

Day 8:

This morning the group will take a half day tour to Giverny to visit Claude Monet's home and garden. Claude Monet noticed the village of Giverny while looking out a train window. He made up his mind to move there and rented a house. In 1890 he set out to create the magnificent gardens he wanted to paint. Some of his most famous paintings, such as his water lily and Japanese bridge paintings were of his garden in Giverny. Monet lived in Giverny from 1883 until his death in 1926. This afternoon is free to enjoy the many sites of Paris at your leisure.



Day 9:

This morning the group will take a half day tour to visit Versailles which was the official residence of the Kings of France from 1682 until 1790. It was originally a hunting lodge, built in 1624, by Louis XIII. He used it as a secret refuge for his amorous trysts with Louise de la Valliere and built a fairy tale park around it. It is here from which the king radiated his power and where the destiny of Europe was decided over a century. The French classical architecture is complemented by extensive gardens. The afternoon is free for you to explore Paris. This evening the group will dine together at a farewell dinner.

Day 10:

This morning the group will take a private coach transfer to the airport for the overnight flight back to the United States.

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations: Blois 4 nights, 2 nights in a Chateau, Paris 3 nights
- Meals: Continental breakfast daily, lunch and dinner as noted in itinerary
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary