

# FRANCE

## OFF THE BEATEN PATH

*World Leader in Small*



*Group Travel in France*

# ACTIVE CULTURAL & CULINARY ADVENTURES IN THE *Loire Valley*

AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING TOUR OPERATORS, IN 2024, OFF THE BEATEN PATH CELEBRATES 30 YEARS LEADING SMALL GROUP TOURS IN FRANCE.

Website - <https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com>

One of our most historically rich tours, our guided, small group Loire Valley Castles and Gourmet Tour far surpasses the offerings of other non-France based and multi-destination tour companies thanks to our long standing presence in the Loire Valley region and our established local relationships with the region's most highly recognized professionals. Our specialty is small group tour travel in France, and we concentrate on ensuring that our focus on travel in France remains our priority! We have established relationships with professionals in the Loire Valley who are not only renowned Michelin-star and Master Chefs and specialty artisans, but who are also our personal friends. We cherish our local Loire Valley friends and the partnerships we've built over the years of friendship. Discover the Loire together with us through our eyes, as our friends warmly and welcomingly open their homes, workshops and professional kitchens to you, our Loire Valley Tour guests. Each day of our Loire Valley Tour, as we journey into the late Medieval and Renaissance periods, you will truly feel like you are stepping back into a magical period of time. Our specialist guides recount sketchy stories, the dirty dish and gossip of the kings, queens and their courts, and factual events of French history.



Come travel the back roads of Loire Valley, France with us during this 6 day/5 night, active, small group tour through the Center region of France ("Le Centre" in French) to discover both spectacular French Medieval and Renaissance history during this award winning Loire Valley castles and gourmet foodie adventure, and to make a many great memories meeting and spending time with our local friends. Step back in time when the Valois and Bourbon families ruled the Kingdom of France to learn about French Kings, Queens and their courts, and all the drama that accompanied them through these fascinating historical periods in a fun and fact filled experience. We embark on daily visits, activities and excursions that unveil magical and sometimes mythical and gruesome stories, that by the end the tour, you will be completely transformed and have a new appreciation for these historical periods and the characters who animated them. Our years of connections and insider access to people, places and events of the region have earned us a solid and excellent reputation as authorities on everything cultural in the Loire Valley. And, we use our "savoir faire" to ensure you experience the very best of the Loire Valley, its castles, history and people in a fun and memorable small group environment. Through our combination of active, cultural and personalized authentic local French experiences, you will feel like you just spent a week with a wonderful group of friends rather than having been on a tour.

EXPERIENCE: INSPIRING ITINERARIES - EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY - EXCELLENT VALUE!



Off the Beaten Path LLC  
Best Boutique French  
Tour Operator

Off the Beaten Path France Tours are Recommended by Best Selling Author PJ Adams as her Tour of Choice to Discover the Loire Valley Region!! AND Off the Beaten Path Owner, Christy Destremau, is the contributor, content specialist, and photographer to PJ Adams' Intoxicating France travel guide series!



TRUSTPILOT



- FRANCE OFF THE BEATEN PATH IS PARTNERED

WITH TRUSTPILOT, an independent review website to collect "independent" traveler reviews about our tours of Provence, Loire Valley, Bordeaux, Champagne, as well as our Specialty and Limited Edition Tours!

Read candid "independent" tour reviews! [TRUSTPILOT TOUR REVIEWS](#)

- Our focus and specialty is and always has been dedicated to small group travel in France – **WE KNOW FRANCE BEST!**
- In 2024, we celebrate 30 YEARS EXPERIENCE leading tours exclusively in France.
- Our exclusive relationships with every one of our vendors in France makes these tours truly the trip of a lifetime!
- The most popular small group tours in France, we include "insider" experiences that other tour companies cannot offer.
- Our tours sell out year after year thanks to our exclusive benefits, exceptional quality, and excellent value.
- We are proud to be named travelers #1 choice for group travel for two decades!

Book one of our small group tours today to discover for yourself why our exclusive France tours have been named **TRAVELERS #1 CHOICE FOR GROUP TRAVEL FOR TWO DECADES!** WEBSITE - <https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com>





*Award Winning* OFF THE BEATEN PATH TOURS  
VOTED BEST ACTIVE, SMALL GROUP TOURS IN FRANCE FOR  
DISCERNING TRAVELERS BY: CONDE NAST, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, FORBES ,  
CNN TRAVELLER, USA TODAY, THE NEW YORK TIMES and TRAVEL & LEISURE!



**WHO IS THIS TOUR DESIGNED FOR?** No experience necessary...Off the Beaten Path Loire Valley Tours are designed for travelers interested in a small group tour that includes a variety of engaging activities (cooking classes, castle tours, wine and cheese tasting), cultural discovery, leisure time, light walking, professional and knowledgeable tour guides, deluxe castle accommodations and sumptuous gourmet Michelin-star meals. It's vacation and Off the Beaten Path tours are all about having fun, enjoying new experiences and being active!

## GUEST TESTIMONIALS:

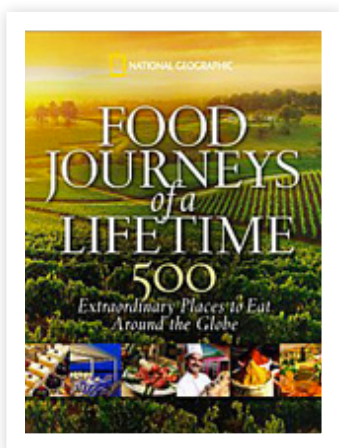
"Thank you for a wonderful and memorable first experience in France. We loved the Chefs, especially Christophe and Angelique and Damien's cheese tasting! Next time, we're looking forward to joining you in Provence!"

Mike and Jen Williams, Atlanta, GA  
(Loire Valley Tour)

"Just a short note to say thanks for everything you did on the tour, we really enjoyed ourselves again. We feel very fortunate to have "discovered" your tours, they are definitely the best group tours we have ever been on. We had a great time, it was especially neat to spend so much time with Christophe & Angelique." Bill & Laurie Crimando, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI (Have been on 3 OTBP Tours)



# Loire Valley TOUR FEATURES:



- This exclusive small group, Loire Valley Tour is led by professional Off the Beaten Path, LLC Company Tour Guides. Our guides are history, culinary and wine specialists and UNESCO Heritage Award Winners. They are professional France history and Loire Valley-specific history specialists who make learning the tidbits, gossip, and stories of France fun and memorable throughout the tour.
  - 5 Nights, 4-star boutique Hotel Accommodations (NO Hotel Hopping) at Pavillon Des Lys --Voted one of the **BEST luxury boutique hotels in the Loire Valley!**
  - 10 Meals Included – 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 Regional Specialty Cocktail Evening, 4 dinners.
- All premium wines and non-alcoholic beverages at group meals!
  - All entry/participation fees for all castle tours, activities, and excursions detailed in the itinerary.
  - Roundtrip transfers on Day 1 and Day 6 of the tour : Day 1 – Transfer provided from Saint Pierre des Corps rail station at 2 pm. Day 6 – Transfer provided to Saint Pierre des Corps rail station for 10 am.
  - Bottled water provided daily.
  - All gratuities to guides, professional driver, hotel staff.
  - All ground transportation throughout the tour.

**NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE** – International airfare to/from France, roundtrip train fare to/from the starting/ending point for the tour, 3 lunches, 1 dinner, personal purchases.

**AUTHENTIC LOIRE VALLEY EXPERIENCES!** Spend 6 days experiencing the Loire Valley like family friends going beyond tourist hotspots to meet and spend time with some of France's best loved and highly recognized artisans, chefs, and winery owners who are our family friends, and welcome you to their workshops, kitchens, and family homes for authentic and fun French experiences unlike any other!





# *Loire Valley Itinerary:* THE KING'S CASTLES, COOKING CLASSES & WINE

## DAY 1: GROUP PICK-UP, HOTEL CHECK-IN, LOIRE RIVER FLOAT & WELCOME COCKTAIL WITH AURELIEN, PRIVATELY HOSTED GOURMET PICNIC - D

Meet at Saint Pierre des Corps rail station at 2:00 PM. Check-in at our 4-star Hotel – Le Pavillon des Lys in historic Amboise for the 6 day/5 night – Loire Valley France Tour Itinerary – (NO HOTEL HOPPING – We Stay in 1 Boutique Hotel Owned by Local Friends for the Entire Tour). Travelers take a TGV (high speed) train from either Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport or Gare de Montparnasse in downtown Paris to reach the Saint Pierre des Corps TGV rail station.

**LATE AFTERNOON:** Winding our way along the Loire River, our next stop of the day is the port of Chaumont-sur-Loire where we'll meet up with local friend Aurelien along the banks of the Loire River. Aurelien welcomes us aboard his traditional wooden, flat bottom boat, called a "tout," for a float down the Loire River taking in the beautiful landscapes, wildlife and unparalleled views of the castles sprinkled along the river banks. We'll float peacefully along our route enjoying a welcome "aperitif" and orientation to the week's activities before arriving in Amboise to a magical view from our boat of the Royal Castle of Amboise at sunset.

**DINNER:** Privately hosted gourmet picnic dinner together this evening prepared by two of the best loved Chefs of the region who I'm happy to call lifelong friends. Christophe has been recommended by his world renowned friend, French Chef Alain Ducasse.

## DAY 2: CHENONCEAU CASTLE & GARDENS, COOKING CLASS WITH FRIEND DAMIEN, WINE & CHEESE TASTING, GOURMET DINNER TOGETHER – B, D



**MORNING:** We depart to the Castle and Gardens of CHENONCEAU. A castle shaped by women, this castle represents the greatest accomplishments of royal women during the French Renaissance. Enjoy untold stories of the most powerful and influential women at the French court, Queens and their love affairs, royal seduction, secret world of favorites and mistresses, the first ever fireworks display in France, extravagant parties and deception, and how royal debt led to the negotiation of a marriage to save the castle from being confiscated by the French state.

**LUNCH:** Independently in Amboise.

## COOKING CLASS

Hands-on cooking class and demonstration with friend, Michelin-star Chef Damien G. in his professional kitchen. Damien is a Michelin star chef with experience that has taken him on culinary adventures around the world. After having traveled extensively to places such as Cyprus and Moscow, he returned to his native Loire Valley to share his culinary experience and knowledge. Cooking class is both hands-on and a demonstration of recipes. No Experience Necessary!

## WINE & CHEESE TASTING

**CULTURAL EXPERIENCE** – A “Tour de France” French wine and cheese tasting wraps up our cooking class experience. Learn very important details about the history and production of cheese in France. We’ll taste a variety of cheeses accompanied by regional wines.

The FOCUS is on discovering favorite recipes of this beautiful region and indulging in the French wine and cheese tasting and learning more about French cheeses with our Chef. This activity is designed for all interest levels from the beginner to the more experienced. Following class, we toast the evening with a cocktail followed by a gourmet dinner together of recipes prepared and demonstrated in class.

**DINNER:** Following class, we toast the evening with a cocktail followed by a gourmet dinner together of recipes prepared in class.





## DAY 3: MORNING: CHAMBORD CASTLE & GARDENS, AMBOISE VILLAGE, FREE TIME AND CLOS LUCE, DINNER TOGETHER – B, D

### BREAKFAST.

**MORNING - CASTLES & GARDENS** - We depart to Chambord Castle. There will be an introduction to the history of Chambord Castle and the region as it existed during the reign and presence in the Loire of the House of Valois and early Bourbon kings. We share stories about two of France's most influential Kings, Francis I and Louis XIV, their royal lifestyles, and personal guests at the castle, as well as steamy stories of what went on in the personal lives of the kings, queens, and their courts.

**LUNCH:** Independently at Chambord Castle.

**AFTERNOON:** FREE TIME on return to Amboise to explore and shop independently at the artisan boutiques and/or visit Le Clos Luce, final home to Leonardo da Vinci.

**DINNER:** Together at friends' gourmet brasserie.



## DAY 4: VIP WINERY TOUR, TASTING & DISCOVERY AT FRIENDS FRED & LOUISA'S WINERY, PRIVATELY HOSTED WINE TASTING LUNCH AT HOME, ROYAL CASTLE OF AMBOISE – B, L

### BREAKFAST.

**MORNING:** VIP WINERY TOUR, TASTING & PRIVATELY HOSTED LUNCH: An exclusive invitation to tour our friends Fred and Louisa's winery where we'll go behind the scenes to learn about Touraine wines and the labor of love this couple has poured into their passion for wine-making. Enjoy tasting their world-renowned wines in addition to some new to market wines they've begun producing.

To top off this exclusive experience, we partake of a traditional French aperitif (cocktail) in the sitting room of their family home, an 18th-century chateau, followed by a privately hosted lunch in the family dining room. Fred's family has been in the wine-making business since the 15th century. Having spent his childhood learning the wine trade, from growing to vineyard management to production and delivery to market, local wine producer, friend Fred and his wife Louisa welcome us to their family winery and home as personal friends for this exclusive behind the scenes experience.



**AFTERNOON:** CASTLES & GARDENS Amboise played a strategic role during the reign of the Valois Kings and their occupation in the Loire Valley during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Nothing is more spectacular than to both journey through history accompanied by sketchy stories of the private lives of the French Kings, Queens and their courts during our visit, and to discover that there was so much more to royal life than military campaigns and political allegiances.



### ROYAL AMBOISE CASTLE

Our day begins at the fairy tale, Royal Castle of Amboise, a spectacular masterpiece where you'll hear tales of love, heartbreak, vengeance, gore, and power struggles. The castle reflects all of the refinements of Gothic and Renaissance architecture and embodies the qualities of a traditional French royal chateau. Following our visit, make the most of your time by taking a short stroll through Amboise to visit the famous Clos Luce, former home of Leonardo da Vinci who lived the last years of his life here as guest of French King Francis I.

**DINNER** - INDEPENDENTLY IN AMBOISE. Guides will offer recommendations. Stroll through the village, enjoy cocktails at sunset overlooking the Loire River and dinner at one of the many favorite places in the village.



## DAY 5: MORNING: ROYAL BLOIS CASTLE & TOWN, COOKING AT HOME CULINARY CLASS WITH FAMILY FRIENDS CHRISTOPHE & ANGELIQUE, FAREWELL DINNER AT OUR CHEFS' FAMILY HOME – B, D

### BREAKFAST.

**BLOIS MARKET** This Guided visit of the weekly market in Blois. From local artisan products to French linens, paintings, clothes, food, wines, artwork and locally made jewelry, the market brings an unparalleled livelihood to villages and towns of the region.

**FREE TIME:** Explore and shop independently at the morning market or at the town shops.

**BLOIS CASTLE** - **AFTERNOON:** Guided tour of Blois Castle followed by time to explore the castle and historic town at leisure. We'll share stories about some of the most note worthy events of French history: a Queen's death, two marriages that would forever change the future of France, important accomplishments by the French monarchy, an assassination, royal deaths, 2 sisters, details of the rigors of daily life during the Renaissance, and quirky facts about royal marriages and deaths.

**LUNCH:** Independently in Blois.



**COOKING CLASS AT HOME** - EVENING: Fun, hands-on cooking class with our friends, Master Chef Angelique and “Meilleur Ouvrier de France” (MOF) and Master Chef Christophe Q. at their family home. Tonight we cook with two of France’s highest rated Master Chefs. Christophe works alongside his friend, celebrity Chef Alain Ducasse on the development of Ducasse’s new worldwide culinary project and “Ecole de Cuisine” concept. Christophe’s wife, Angelique, is a Professeur de Cuisine in the Val de Loire region. Both are passionate about the culinary arts, and have received top awards from and along with Paul Bocuse, Alain Ducasse and Joel Robuchon. Christophe is currently featured on gourmet television in France, as one of the Loire Valley’s most highly recognized Chefs.

We will prepare a gourmet aperitif and dinner of local Loire Valley recipes together. Our Loire Valley Tour guests will have the great pleasure of partaking in an “aperitif dinatoire”, as we call it in French, of the recipes prepared together. Guests will also learn how to prepare the award winning, regional “Tarte Tatin” dessert with Christophe. *No Experience Necessary!* The cooking class is designed to appeal to all interest levels from the beginner to the more experienced. Cooking class, drinks and dinner at Christophe and Angelique’s home is a fabulous way to celebrate a fun week together in the Loire Valley!



**GOURMET DINNER** – Cooking class, drinks and dinner at Christophe and Angelique’s home is a fabulous way to celebrate a fun week together in the Loire Valley!

## DAY 6: TOUR CONCLUSION - B

**BREAKFAST.** Trip concludes today. 10 am transfer to Saint Pierre des Corps rail station. Earlier and later departures can be arranged. Please contact us for details

(B) = BREAKFAST INCLUDED, (L) = LUNCH INCLUDED, (D) = DINNER INCLUDED



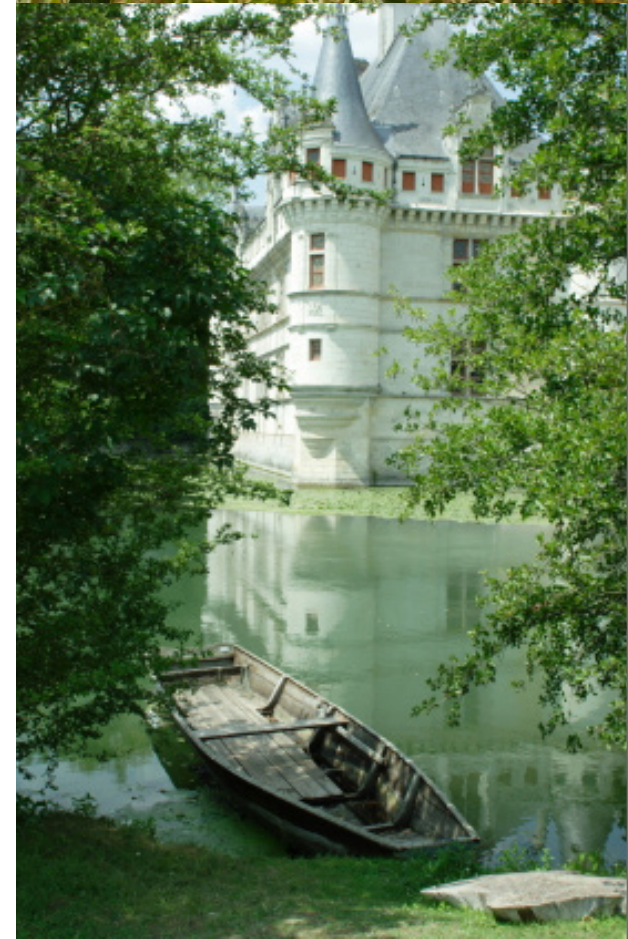
# Loire Valley TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- Fully Guided sightseeing, walks, excursions, and cultural visits throughout the tour by professional Off the Beaten Path, LLC (OTBP) Company Tour Guides. OTBP Guides are UNESCO award winners, contributors to Loire Valley Travel Guidebooks, and are accomplished authors. OTBP Tour guides are professional France history and Loire Valley-specific history specialists who make learning the tidbits, gossip, anecdotes and stories of France fun and memorable throughout the tour.
- 5 nights — **NO HOTEL HOPPING!** — at 4-Star boutique Hotel Le Pavillon des Lys in historical Amboise, and is owned and operated by our personal friends Guillaume & Julia.
- **10 Meals Included** – 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 4 dinners.
- All premium wines and non-alcoholic beverages at group meals!
- All entry/participation fees for all castle tours, activities, and excursions detailed in the itinerary.
- Roundtrip transfers on Day 1 and Day 6 of the tour : Day 1 – Transfer provided from Saint Pierre des Corps rail station at 2 pm. Day 6 – Transfer provided to Saint Pierre des Corps rail station at 10 am.
- Bottled water provided daily.
- All ground transportation throughout the tour.
- –**COMFORT ZONE**– Designed for the interests of and to appeal to BOTH WALKERS & NON-WALKERS alike — this is a leisure walking tour.

**NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE** – International airfare to/from France, roundtrip train fare to/from the starting/ending point for the tour, 3 lunches, 1 dinner, gratuities to guides, professional driver, hotel staff, personal purchases.

## AUTHENTIC LOIRE VALLEY EXPERIENCES!

Spend 6 days experiencing the Loire Valley like family friends going beyond tourist hotspots to meet and spend time with some of France's best loved and highly recognized artisans, chefs, and winery owners who are our family friends, and welcome you to their workshops, kitchens, and family homes for authentic and fun French experiences unlike any other!



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A horizontal band with a rustic, weathered wood texture in shades of green, blue, and brown.

## 2024 – LOIRE VALLEY TOUR DATES AND PRICES

2024 TOUR DATES & PRICE - [CLICK HERE TO REVIEW THE \*\*\\*\\*2024\\*\\*\*\* TOUR SCHEDULE!](#)





**ACTIVITY RATING:** 95% Easy, 5% Moderate.

**TOUR BEGINS:** Day 1 - Transfer provided from Saint Pierre des Corps rail station to our hotel in Amboise at 2 pm.

**TOUR ENDS:** Day 6 - Transfer provided from our hotel to Saint Pierre des Corps rail station for 10 am.

## GUEST TESTIMONIALS:

"I had a taste of every piece of heaven that I wanted and expected in the Loire Valley! Loved it all! Great variety, great fun!! Can't wait for the next adventure with you!!" **Natalie Spiro, San Diego, CA (Loire Valley Tour)**



history and all the chateaux were great and interesting. I liked the combination of history, food and wine that this trip offered and the good value of the trip itself." **Lisa Jarrold, Brisbane, Australia (Loire Valley Tour)**

"My favorites were Angelique's cooking class, Damien's wine and extensive cheese tasting and the hot air ballooning. Don't change a thing, it was all wonderful, loved it! I had a memorable week, thanks for everything!" **Odette Pagan, Brisbane, Australia (Loire Valley Tour)**



# Oui...WHAT WE DO-WHAT WE GUARANTEE OUR GUESTS...

WE GUARANTEE SOME VERY SPECIFIC SERVICES THAT WE BELIEVE YOU, AS OUR GUEST, DESERVE.

🍷 **WE ALSO OFFER VALUE-ADDED SERVICES AND OTHER CHARMING SURPRISES** on our tours including complimentary use of (1) Ipad minis (with both 4G and wifi access) and (2) digital point and shoot cameras PLUS enjoy a surprise regional gift on our Provence Tours, complimentary champagne & chocolates and a surprise gift in your room on our Loire Valley and Bordeaux Tours, and a surprise gift on Champagne Tours.

🍷 **WE ENSURE A "SMALL GROUP" REMAINS JUST THAT - A "SMALL GROUP" !**

The group size on each of our tours is a maximum 12-16 guests. Many of our trips sell out completely meaning group size is 16 guests (and 12 guests for tours limited to 12 guests maximum per departure), and some trips average 12-14 guests. Our experience has been that limiting our group size to 16 guests per tour creates the ideal ambiance for guests to easily mingle and get to know each other, yet still maintain their independence. We also limit our group size in order to preserve each guest's personalized experience, and ensure our famous quality customer service.

🍷 **WE INCLUDE ALL BEVERAGES (BOTH ALCOHOLIC & NON-ALCOHOLIC) IN OUR PROVENCE TOUR PRICES!**

We always include a welcome cocktail on day 1 of each tour, plus some additional group meals include pre-dinner cocktails in addition to the premium, classified and "Grand Cru" wines included at all groups meals during each of our tours. Of course, guests are always free to opt out of any included group meal to try a restaurant, cafe or other dining option on their own or simply to enjoy a private dining experience.

🍷 **WE ALWAYS PROVIDE GUESTS THE BEST ROOMS AT EVERY HOTEL !**

We always reserve the VERY BEST for our guests ! Plus there is NEVER any hotel hopping on our tours. We select one exclusive, luxurious, historical establishment for the entire 5 nights of each tour (3 nights on Champagne Tours, 4 nights on Dordogne Tours).

🍷 **OUR SCHEDULED WALKS ARE ALWAYS GUIDED !**

We always guide our walks !! Our guides are experienced, and have walked our trails repeatedly each season - even in the off season. They are knowledgeable about what each trail has to offer. Our guides accompany every walk on every tour where optional and scheduled walks are included. And our guides remain with the group during the entirety of each walk. We believe your walks with us should always be fun, interesting and a time to sit back and enjoy the views along the trail while someone else takes charge and shows you the way! We have specially designed all of our trails exclusively to share with our guests.

🍷 **WE WILL ALWAYS PROVIDE VAN SUPPORT FOR OUR WALKS !**

In addition to providing guides who accompany each walk on our tours, we always provide a support van whose driver's sole responsibility is to meet the group at designated points throughout each walk to provide more refreshments and snacks, collect any purchases made during visits along our trails, and provide a ride to any guest who needs a break.



# *Walking Ratings* FOR LOIRE VALLEY TOURS

Always enjoyable walking on Off the Beaten Path Tours - Nomatter which of our active, small group tours you join, you can expect to know, in advance, the level of difficulty of the walks scheduled during each tour. We also provide flexible options daily for non-walkers.

EVERY OFF THE BEATEN PATH TOUR VACATION IS DESIGNED TO MEET A WIDE VARIETY OF GUEST FITNESS LEVELS.  
EACH WALK IS CATEGORIZED USING THE SYSTEM BELOW.

**EASY:** Relatively flat terrain. Well-kept paths. Fine for even occasional walkers.

- Average walk distance: 2–5 miles
- Average walking time: Up to 3 hours

**EASY TO MODERATE:** Ideal for those who walk for a morning or afternoon on a regular basis. Footing may be a variety of surfaces --mostly vineyard and country trails. No extended ascents or descents.

- Average walk distance: 4–6 miles
- Average walking time: Up to 4 hours

**MODERATE:** Suitable for experienced walkers who are comfortable with ascents and descents (but no scrambling!). Uneven terrain possible. Vineyard, country and gravel trails.

- Average daily distance: 5-8 miles
- Average walking time: up to 4-5 hours

## LOIRE VALLEY TOURS ARE RATED AS FOLLOWS:

- **ALL TOUR GUESTS - ALL TOUR GUESTS** – There is extensive leisure walking daily on this tour. Guests need to be able to walk from our drop off points to castles, through castles during visits, as well as manage standing for short periods of time during story telling at the castles. Guests need to also be able to manage steps and uneven sidewalk terrain throughout the tour at castles and in villages. There are no elevators or escalators available to our groups at the chateaux (castles). This tour is not suitable for anyone with mobility issues.
- **TOUR RATING** - Tour Rating = EASY. Tour involves only daily leisure walking at castles and in villages.



# ADDITIONAL *Loire Valley* TOUR INFORMATION

## UNRIVALED EXPERTISE WITHIN FRANCE AND THE BEST TOUR GUIDES:

All Off the Beaten Path guides are Americans with dual nationality (American-French citizenship), are multi-lingual and reside in France. They also bring a wealth of local information and history to enrich each guest's experience and have been selected for their comprehensive understanding of French culture. You will find that Off the Beaten Path guides are wonderful traveling companions, whose knowledge and sense of fun and positive attitude make each day a wonderful experience.

## WHERE DO WE RENDEZVOUS ON DAY 1 OF THE LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?

Your OTBP Guide(s) will meet you at the St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail station Tours, France at 2 pm. Complete meeting time and location information is detailed in your tour information package that we send you 30 days prior to the start date of your tour.

## WHERE DOES THE LOIRE VALLEY TOUR FINISH?

We depart the hotel in the morning in order to arrive at 10 AM at the St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail station in Tours, France. Earlier returns to the station can be arranged.



## WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED ON MY LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?

Airfare to and from France, Train fare to and from St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail station Tours, France, 3 lunches, 1 dinner, gratuities to tour guides and professional driver, and any personal purchases.

## DO I NEED TO BE AN ATHLETE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?

No. However, France is a country of walkers. Our Loire Valley Tour is designed for active travelers and includes extensive leisure walking daily. Travelers need to be able to walk and stand for extended periods of time while listening to commentary/history about the castles during visits. This tour is not suitable for travelers with serious back or knee problems. It is not possible to drop-off or pick-up guests at the entry of castles before or after visits, and therefore guests must be able to walk short distances from the vans to the sites, as well as be able to also enjoy exploring historical villages, towns and corresponding markets on foot. We enjoy the "slow road" taking in the beautiful scenery of the castles and local villages daily, and our tours are focused on actively discovering this magnificent region.





## ❧ HOW SHOULD I GO ABOUT MAKING MY TRAVEL PLANS?

Off the Beaten Path is a full service tour operator and it is our pleasure to assist you with all aspects of upcoming travel plans. Whether you are looking for a suggestion for a hotel in Paris or assistance with your rail tickets, simply contact us at [contact@traveloffthebeatenpath.com](mailto:contact@traveloffthebeatenpath.com) or call us at 1.877.846.2831 for assistance.

## ❧ IS WINE INCLUDED AT MEALS? WHAT KIND OF WINES ARE INCLUDED AT MEALS?

Yes, wine is included at all scheduled meals together. We expertly match premium wines from the region we're visiting with each dish. Meals offer an excellent opportunity to try wines from appellations not available to guests at home, and to introduce guests to some select wines worth a favorable mention or that are exceptionally appreciated by the locals.



## ❧ WHAT IS THE WEATHER GOING TO BE LIKE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY?

April through October, day time temperatures in the Loire Valley range from the 70's- to mid-80's Fahrenheit with evenings being slightly cooler. Typically it is sunny, but be prepared with the proper rain gear.

## ❧ WHAT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WILL I NEED FOR MY TOUR?

All travelers to France are required to have a valid passport. Please make 2 copies of your passport and personal identification before you depart. Keep one set of copies with you in a separate location from your travel documents, and leave the other set of copies with a contact at home before you depart. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please check with your consulate general for entry requirements.

## ❧ WHO ARE THE LOIRE VALLEY TOURS DESIGNED FOR?

OTBP's Loire Valley Tours are designed for discerning travelers of all ages and backgrounds, from the seasoned traveler and independent traveler to the first time traveler to France. Join any one of our tours as a solo traveler, a couple, a small group of friends or family, or bring your entire travel club, affinity group, women's organization or wine society. No culinary, history or other type of experience is necessary. Join us for the vacation of a lifetime to discover the Best of the Loire Valley, as an insider, and make new friends along the way.



- **ARE ALL OFF THE BEATEN PATH TOURS IN ENGLISH?**

Yes. All tours are conducted in English and designed for an English speaking clientele. The majority of OTBP Guests come from the U.S.A., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and England. Guests have also come from the Caribbean, Singapore, the Philippines, South Africa, and Israel.

- **DO I NEED TO BE AN EXPERT TO TAKE YOUR LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?**

Not at all. The idea is to learn about French culture, traditions, wine, daily life, artisan lives and culinary practices in a fun and relaxing environment. Our tours offer great learning opportunities for everyone. Off the Beaten Path guides are very skilled at adapting their discussions to the general level of knowledge of the group, providing good introductory information for novices, and more advanced discussions for those who have more experience or a specialty interest. It's vacation and our tours are all about having fun, enjoying new experiences and being active!

- **HOW ARE THE LOIRE VALLEY TOURS STRUCTURED?**

Having 26 years experience in the tour industry, specifically with small group touring, we have found that our guests are generally more interested in active experiences, culture, people to people experiences and guided tours of museums and sites. Our guests like to visit private homes, and pursue their hobbies when they travel. Our guests enjoy being able to shop locally for items, such as, collectibles, art and local products. Our guests tend to do more homework and want a meatier trip, but also want to enjoy down time or leisure time to explore independently. All of our trips are designed based on these factors. Each trip offers organized activities and excursions daily combined with periods of leisure time each day. Our tours encourage individual approach and pursuit of your interests, as well as introducing you to new experiences and people during each trip.

- **HOW SHOULD I PACK? HOW SHOULD I EXPECT TO DRESS DURING THE TOUR?**

Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on. Try not to over pack; you will not wear all your clothing! A suggested packing list will be enclosed in your tour information package. Pack comfortable light weight, casual clothing. It's vacation and we want our guests to feel and be as comfortable as possible during our daily activities and excursions. Our dinners together include a mix of Michelin star and casual bistro style restaurants. For men we suggest a business casual ensemble (no tie or jacket necessary unless it's your personal preference) and for women we recommend a casual dress for dinners.





# Hotel PAVILLON DES LYS

Pavillon des Lys has been voted one of the BEST 4-star boutique hotels in the Loire Valley! Each of the nine beautifully appointed rooms of this 4-star boutique hotel are decorated in its own unique style. As this is a historic building that has been transformed into a boutique hotel, no two rooms are alike in size, decor or furnishings. Rooms are spacious and vary in style and design. Each room at our Loire Valley tour hotel includes a large king/queen size bed or two twin beds and private en-suite bathroom with all modern amenities (shower/tub, toilet, toiletries, hair dryer, etc.). Some rooms offer a view of the Castle of Amboise. The hotel is not equipped with an elevator.

**DAILY BREAKFAST:** Enjoy a traditional French breakfast each morning either in the dining room or on the garden terrace before we head out for a day of fun excursions and activities. The hotel breakfast features all of the traditional French goodies including croissants, pain au chocolat (chocolate croissants), fresh baguette breads, fresh fruit salad, yoghurts, a variety of cereals to choose from, plus a selection of French cheeses, fresh fruit juices, and hot beverages such as coffee, tea and hot chocolate. French breakfast differs greatly from the style of breakfast in your home country — there are no pancakes or omelettes, etc in a French breakfast, and France does not have breakfast restaurants.

The Pavillon des Lys is located in the historic center of the Royal town of Amboise — in the heart of the Touraine, known best as the Loire Valley. Its location in the town center, right next to Amboise Castle and the Clos Lucé Manor, which was the the last residence of Leonardo da Vinci, makes the hotel the perfect and ideal selection for our 6-day tour in the Loire Valley. Guests can step out the door of the hotel into the town's cobblestone streets to explore Amboise and discover the town's artisan shops and cafes during leisure time. The owners of our Loire Valley Tour hotel welcome Off the Beaten Path guests, as distinguished friends to their hotel.

There is NEVER ANY HOTEL HOPPING on any Off the Beaten Path Tours. All Tours are home-based, meaning we stay at 1 hotel for the entire tour.

All accommodations on Off the Beaten Path, LLC small group tours offer a charming and historical environment in combination with complete and comprehensive modern amenities and services, and are centrally located to the activities and excursions scheduled for each of our tours. All accommodations on Off the Beaten Path tours of France include large comfortable beds (queen or king size) and fully-equipped, private, en-suite bathrooms.



## LOIRE VALLEY GUEST *Testimonials:*



"The choice of castles was excellent. Cooking classes, dinners and markets were fun and interesting, and we LOVED the hot air ballooning, it was so much fun. Really enjoyed our guide! THANKS FOR A MEMORABLE TIME!"  
Ralph and Stephanie Sorley, Boston, MA (Loire Valley Tour)

"Loved ALL of it! The pace, variety, quality, sequence of events. Many thanks, YOU RUN A VERY PROFESSIONAL AND HIGH QUALITY TOUR. You have exceeded all of my expectations. It has been a memorable trip!" Amanda Croker, Brisbane, Australia (Loire Valley Tour)

"THE TRIP GETS A 5 OUT OF 5! My favorite thing was the extensive cheese and wine tasting with Damien. Thanks to our guide for making this trip so exceptional!"  
Marti Hyland, Arlington, VA (Loire Valley Tour)



"Thanks for a spectacular trip in such a beautiful region! We had great dinner conversations. It was very comfortable traveling around in your minivans. The hospitality of such famous chefs was outstanding. GREAT JOB!! Already been to Bordeaux, but after our wonderful Loire experience with you WE NEED TO LOOK AT DATES TO COME ON ONE OF YOUR PROVENCE TOURS NEXT!!"  
Don Drapeau and Betty Folliard, Minneapolis, MN (Loire Valley Tour)







One of the most flattering questions that we have ever received, as a tour company, came from our guest Dennis Gerner. Dennis and his wife Pat traveled on 2 back to back tours with us.

Dennis' question one afternoon was,

"WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS?  
IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER EVERY DAY!"

Thanks Dennis for such a flattering question and Pat's and your ever so flattering trip comments! We love receiving feedback and hearing about how guests have enjoyed their tour(s). Whether joining one of our Provence Tours, Loire Valley Tours or Bordeaux Tours, our dedication and focus to providing the best ever authentic France travel experiences during each of our small group tours is paramount!

WE STRIVE TO EXCEED GUEST EXPECTATIONS EVERY TRIP!!



## NOT JUST A TOUR: IT'S AN **AUTHENTIC** OFF THE BEATEN PATH *French Experience...*

Unrivaled expertise within France sets Off the Beaten Path, LLC apart from non-France based and multi-destination tour companies. Off the Beaten Path, LLC (OTBP) is American owned and operated. In 2024, the company celebrates 30 years delivering small, engaging group, walking, gourmet foodie, wine and cultural tours exclusively in France. OTBP active, small group France tours offer travelers the very BEST, and most inspiring and exclusive itineraries filled with cultural “insider” experiences to discover Provence, Loire Valley, Bordeaux, Champagne, Normandy, and Dordogne, France.

Enjoy exceptional quality and excellent value on an OTBP small group tour today! Travelers and publications rate Off the Beaten Path Tours the BEST active, small group tours in France thanks to the unparalleled “insider” experiences featured in each tour itinerary. The company’s renowned “insider” relationships with regional French chefs, artisans, and cultural industry professionals put Off the Beaten Path far ahead of the competition when it comes to creating one-of-a-kind itineraries to experience the very BEST of France! Whether you’re a seasoned small group tour traveler, or new to the small group tour scene, Off the Beaten Path tours offer fun, enriching, interactive, local, and authentic French experiences and activities for everyone.

More than just a tour, Off the Beaten Path, transforms the entire guest experience into a personalized and exclusive “unparalleled” active, cultural affair that far exceeds guest expectations! We connect guests with lifelong, French friends who rank among France’s top-rated chefs, specialty artisans, artists, wine producers, hotel & castle owners, and entertainers! Expert Professional English speaking guides who live in France, inspiring itineraries, deluxe historical hotel accommodations, sumptuous French meals, classified regional wines, and comfortable transportation in private, spacious, professionally driven vehicles are immutable standards on every Off the Beaten Path Tour. Each tour itinerary is comprised of a variety of engaging activities and enriching experiences for guests to authentically discover the heart and soul of each region. Participate in cooking classes with our friends who are celebrity Master, Meilleur Ouvrier de France, and Michelin-star chefs who look forward to your arrival, and make you feel welcome in their family homes, professional kitchens, and workshops as a group of friends.

Shop at weekly village markets where OTBP tour guides introduce you to our French friends who are olive oil and wine producers, artists, cheese-makers, herb and spice vendors, craftsmen, perfumery and linen artisans, and designers. Walk the same countryside and vineyard trails that regional French residents do with their families. Enjoy the slow road scenery that comes with walking local country trails through vineyards, flower fields of lavender, poppies, and sunflowers, olive and fruit orchards, and small historic villages. Tour castles, pre-historic caves, and other historical monuments and sites with our knowledgeable, professional UNESCO award-winning guides. Learn the juicy, fun untold stories of French history! Dine in the same gourmet restaurants and bistros, as local French do — where the chefs are our personal friends and set aside a table uniquely to welcome you as their exclusive guests. Built-in leisure time provides guests with opportunities to pursue independent interests and activities or to break away from the group for some quiet or personal time.

Every OTBP tour offers daily options with varying levels of activeness. You always have the flexibility of deciding how each day unfolds. OTBP tour guides sit down with the group every day to discuss the activities, excursions, walks, local events, and options of the day. With so many options available during each tour, we ensure you the flexibility to be as active as you choose (more walking, less walking, shopping time, cultural discovery, people watching, photography, etc.), and to also enjoy leisure time to pursue independent interests, all while enjoying the perks of traveling in a small group. Our tour guides take care and manage the daily logistics and details while you, our guest, spend your time on the critical stuff — having fun, relaxing and enjoying your vacation your way! The idea behind each OTBP tour is to appeal to the discerning traveler of all ages and backgrounds who seeks something new and different, and who wants to reach out and discover something inspiring.





# FRANCE

## OFF THE BEATEN PATH

*World Leader in Small*



*Group Travel in France*



FRANCE OFF THE BEATEN PATH HAS RECENTLY PARTNERED WITH TRUSTPILOT, an independent review website to collect “independent” traveler reviews about our tours of Provence, Loire Valley, Bordeaux, and Champagne!

Read candid “independent” tour reviews! [TRUSTPILOT TOUR REVIEWS](#)

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

<https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com>

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Off the Beaten Path, LLC is an American owned and operated company licensed and bonded to protect your vacation investment.
- Off the Beaten Path, LLC holds a website identity assurance warranty of \$100,000. Travelers are insured for up to \$100,000 per tour reservation booking when relying on the information provided by GeoTrust IdAuthority (Equifax Secure Certificate Authority) on our website.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH, LLC

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