

**TOUR LOIRE VALLEY CASTLES, GARDENS, AMAZING RESTAURANTS, WINE
DOMAINES & O'ENOLOGIE AND COOKING CLASSES**

with

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Loire Valley, France

Beginning Sunday September 1 & Monday September 9, 2019

Welcome to the Loire Valley! The Loire Valley is an exceptional cultural landscape, of great beauty, comprised of historic cities and villages, great architectural monuments. The chateaux and lands have been cultivated and shaped by centuries of interaction between local populations and their physical environment, and in particular the Loire River itself. The Loire Valley wine region is one of the world's most unique areas of wine production. Loire wines tend to exhibit a characteristic fruitiness with fresh, crisp flavors.

UNESCO added the central part of the river valley, between Chalonnes-sur-Loire and Sully-sur-Loire, to its list of World Heritage Sites. The architectural heritage in the valley's historic towns is notable, especially its châteaux, such as the Château d'Amboise, Château d'Azay-le-Rideau, Château de Chambord, Château de Blois, Château de Cheverny, Château de Villandry and Chateau Chenonceau.

This 8-day, 7 night tour will feature castles, gardens, great restaurants, and wines of the region.

DAY 1 – Our 19 passenger Mercedes van will pick us up at a specified hotel in Paris. On the way to our “Charming” Hotel in the Loire Valley, you will have a guided tour of one the world's most famous castles in the Loire Valley, Chenonceau. Chateau de Chenonceau is considered, the “Ladies’ Chateau”. At Chenonceau, after the tour we will have the “Les Plaisirs Royaux” lunch with wine in The Orangerie, their fine-dining restaurant,. After Chateau Chenonceau we will visit Les Caves Monmousseau winery and have a tasting and tour of their underground cave. In addition to their storing wine, you will see luminous tapestries in their cave. After our tour, lunch, and visit to this wine Domaine, we will check in at Hotel Au-Charme-Rabelaisien in Amboise. You can unpack, rest and/or swim. Since we have had a very big lunch, our evening repass will be Loire Valley wines, cheeses & a selection of appetizers served around the hotel pool.

DAY 2 - Yesterday was a long day, you can sleep in and join our group for breakfast at 8:30 am for a discussion of the plans for the week. After breakfast we will head to “Tours of the Table” a cooking & oenology school for two classes. First a three hour participation class featuring popular dishes of the Loire Valley. Lunch will be served after the class and will consist of the items we prepared. After lunch our next class will be “Degustation de Vins OEnologie”, a 2 1/2 hour course in the wines of the region, including an introduction to the skills of wine tasting and a detailed discussion and tasting of Sancerre and Sancerre Rouge wines.

After all our classes and lunch at “Tours of the Table” we will head back to Chateau Au-Charme-Rabelaisien for a rest or swim. Dinner this night will be at either La Roche le Roy or La Deuvaliere.

La Roche le Roy (September 1 Tour) is a gastronomic key venue in Tours. It is located in a splendid manor house and is part of the city history. The chef, Maximilien Bridier, and his talented team propose traditional French cuisine reworked with modern style. We will enjoy a special dinner in one of their private dining rooms and a tour of their cave.

La Deuvalière (September 9 Tour) is set in a charming 16th century building built of “tuffeau”, the local white stone, and, with its traditional exposed beams and red hexagonal floor tiles, the building is typical of the architecture around historic “Place Plumereau” in the heart of old Tours.

DAY 3- We will begin today with a visit to Chateau de Villandry and the Chateau’s Gardens. The Chateau de Villandry is the last of the great chateaux of the Loire Valley built during the Renaissance. The sober elegance of its architecture combined with the charm of its outstanding gardens make this one of the jewels of world heritage. It has the distinctive feature of being the residence of neither a king nor a courtesan, but of Jean Le Breton, Minister of Finance for Francois I.

At Villandry, Jean Le Breton drew from his exceptional architectural experience acquired on a large number of sites, including the Chateau of Chambord, which he supervised and directed on behalf of the Crown over many years.

Next a guided tour of the Royal Château d'Azay-le-Rideau. Built between 1518 and 1527, this Château is considered one of the foremost examples of early French Renaissance architecture. Set on an island in the middle of the Indre River, this picturesque château has become one of the most popular of the châteaux of the Loire valley. The château received its first royal visit on June 27, 1619, by Louis XIII while on his way from Paris to visit his mother, Marie de Medici, in Blois. Later in the century, his son Louis XIV was also a guest.

After the guided tour we will be off to a light lunch at Les Grottes in their cave!

After lunch we will visit a winery, Domaine Couly-Dutheil for a tasting of Chinon wines. Their wines have finesse, subtlety and presence without being manipulated or over wooded. They are pure, exhilarating Cabernet Francs that make great partners for many foods. We will have the opportunity to taste several of their wines.

We will continue to stay in this area of the Loire Valley and have a private tour followed by a fabulous dinner at Abbaye Fontevraud. The Royal Abbey Fontevraud is one of the largest surviving monastic cities from the middle Ages. Fontevraud is one of the important stops since its creation nearly a thousand years ago by an eccentric monk. The Abbey has always been a place of social and sexual diversity! The Abbey was run by an abbess, who gave shelter to both men and women.

The reclining effigies of Eleanor of Aquitaine, of her husband Henry 2nd and of their son Richard the Lionheart, which you will see in the Abbey Church, is a reminder of this glorious past. And in the 19th century, the Abbey was one of the toughest prisons in France.

After the tour of the Abbey we will enjoy an amazing dinner in their Michelin starred restaurant's large private dining space. It will dwarf our group, but allow us to admire some of the very best menu presentations we have seen.

DAY 4 – For our next visit to our cooking school in Tours, we will have their “Balade Gourmande” class. We will begin with a walk to “Les Halles of Tours”, where our chef will guide us through the market to buy food from the shopkeepers for the participation class that our chef instructor will lead. After the class we will enjoy the lunch we made. Donna will have worked with the French Chef to pick a lunch menu based on available produce and ingredients at that time of the year.

After lunch we are planning on a chocolate demonstration by a chocolatier in Tours. Then we will let you wander a fun walking street in Tours and to enjoy this vibrant town. After a rest/swim back at the hotel, we will have dinner at L’atelier Oliver Arlot in Saint-Cyr-sur Loire.

DAY 5- We will have a guided tour of the Royal Château d’Amboise. The Chateau was confiscated by the monarchy in the 15th century and became a favored royal residence and thereafter extensively rebuilt. King Charles VIII died at the Château in 1498 after hitting his head on a door lintel.

After the guided tour we will have lunch at L'Ecluse, a restaurant in Amboise known for specializing in local produce and wine. Then an afternoon visit to Les Caves des Roches, near Amboise. Here we will find a subterranean mushroom farm, another happy casualty of limestone-quarry operations of past years. With 250 miles of caves on several levels, the site is a serious production facility for gourmet fungi including Oyster, Blue Foot (40 percent of the world's supply of this variety is grown here) and Shiitake — all told, over 100 tons of mushrooms are produced here a year.

Next, a visit to the Da Vinci Chateau and Museum, Clos Luce. King Francis I and Louise de Savoie invited Leonardo da Vinci to Amboise. King Francis I, passionate about Leonardo da Vinci’s talent, named him “ Premier Painter and Engineer and Architect of the King" and offered him the enjoyment of the Château of Clos Lucé, located only a few meters away from the Château d’Amboise. Leonardo spent the last three years of his life at the Château of Clos Lucé and worked on several projects for the king of France. Leonardo da Vinci is buried here at the Chateau.

Dinner tonight will be at Le Val Joli, in Vouvray.

DAY 6- Today we are going to immerse ourselves in tasting and understanding Vouvray wine. The Chenin Blanc grape used to make Vouvray wine is grown in the USA, but the terroir in Vouvray France produces a totally different wine than produced here. Instead of just one Vouvray wine tasting we will go to two great producers, Domaine Pichot & Domaine Champalou. Both of these wineries have some of their wines distributed in Arizona. Half of our tour group will taste at Domaine Pichot while the

other half will taste at Champalou. After lunch at Restaurant La Cave in Montlouis-sur Loire, our two groups switch to taste at the other winery. We will be tasting four styles of Vouvray: a dry, a half dry, a very soft and a sparkling.

After the wine tastings and lunch you will have free time back at the hotel for rest or swim. Since we will have had a very big lunch and lots of Vouvray to taste, our evening repass again will be more Loire Valley wines, cheeses & a selection of appetizers served around the hotel pool.

DAY 7- On our last full day in the Loire Valley we will head to Blois. Our first stop will be the Royal Chateau de Blois. Classified as a historic monument since 1845, the royal chateau of Blois presents a magnificent panorama of the art and history of the castles of the Loire. Surrounding the court, its four wings constitute a unique example of the development of French architecture from the 13th through the 17th century. With its multitude of styles, the edifice evokes the destiny of 7 kings and 10 queens of France.

After the tour we will have lunch at Chez Madeline in Cour Cheverny and have an opportunity to taste some Cour-Cheverny Blanc wine made from the rare local Romarantin grape.

After lunch we will tour the Chateau de Cheverny. The Château de Cheverny is located in the village of Cheverny. The castle was built by the Hurault family from 1624 to 1630, on the site of an earlier feudal castle. One of the last Loire Valley castles to be built, the castle at Cheverny is in white stone and follows the classical style that was popular at the time of Louis XIII. It is generally agreed that Cheverny is the most beautifully furnished of all the castles in the Loire Valley, and you will see numerous beautiful examples of 17th century furniture and wall coverings as well as ornaments, clothes and other small objects that help bring the visit to life.

After returning to the Chateau we will have our Dinner d'Adieu at the 1 Star Gastronomic Restaurant in Chateau de Pray in Amboise. The Chateau is situated on the southern banks of the Loire River and dates from 1244. We will enjoy a 9 course "Tasting Menu" prepared by Chef Arnard Philippon with excellent Loire Valley wines.

DAY 8 - We will be sorry to say Au Revoir, but our van will be taking you back to Paris. But not without some important tour stops. The first will be Chateau de Chambord, which inspired Disney's "Beauty and the Beast." Château de Chambord is one of the most recognizable châteaux in the world because of its very distinctive French Renaissance architecture which blends traditional French medieval forms with classical Renaissance structures. The building was constructed by King Francis I of France.

Chambord is the largest château in the Loire Valley; it was built to serve as a hunting lodge for Francis I, who maintained his royal residences at the Château de Blois and Amboise. We will have lunch in their Café d'Orléans, located in the heart of the castle with a terrace overlooking a courtyard and a fireplace that crackles in autumn.

After leaving Chambord we will make a brief stop at Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral. This cathedral is one of the most authentic and complete works of religious architecture of the early 13th century. It

was the destination of a pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary, among the most popular in all medieval Western Christianity. Because of the unity of its architecture and decoration, the result of research of the first Gothic era, its immense influence on the art of Middle Age Christianity, Chartres Cathedral appears as an essential landmark in the history of medieval architecture. The outstanding stained-glass ensemble, monumental statuary of the 12th and 13th centuries and the painted decorations miraculously preserved from the ravages of humankind and time, make Chartres one of the most admirable and the best-preserved examples of Gothic art.

After Visiting Chartes we will continue on and really say “Au Revoir” and return you to a hotel in Paris.

The cost of tour from pickup to drop off in Paris will be \$4,875.00 /person single or double occupancy.

September 9th Tour is sold out!

If interested in booking or would like more information, please contact Don at dsluria@gmail.com or Donna at donnanordincooks@gmail.com