



# Paris and the Loire Valley

## City Splendor and Country Chateaux

April 8 - 17, 2011

From the heady allure of the Left Bank to the rolling beauty of chateau country, an ever-changing panorama unfolds as we travel through one of the loveliest regions of France.

Beginning in Paris, the romantic City of Light, we'll roam the winding streets and expansive boulevards, taking in the archetypal Parisian sights and sounds—the Gothic splendor of Notre Dame, the charm of Ile St. Louis, the soaring Tour Eiffel, the Arc de Triomphe, and the unparalleled Louvre Museum. Beyond the city, we'll experience the majesty of Versailles with a local guide who takes us through its extravagant rooms and glorious gardens.

Continuing on to the Loire Valley, we'll stop to explore the mysteries of Chartres on the way. From our wonderful hotel in Amboise, we'll sample a selection of stunning medieval and Renaissance chateaux, scattered around the countryside. From the romance of Chenonceau arching across the Cher River, to the staggering grandeur of Chambord, a Renaissance masterpiece, to the beauty of Fontainebleau, a favorite of Napoleon, and all of their many intricate gardens, here is an experience of magnificence that reveals itself day by day.

Spending 4 nights in the fabulous Manoir les Minimes in Amboise and with a wonderful balance of guided days and free time to explore on your own, you'll truly experience the beauty and grace of *Paris and the Loire Valley*.



Chateau de Chenonceau



The Sacre Coeur

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Land only (no airfare included): **\$3990**  
The single supplement is: **\$780**

*Airfares are available from many U.S. departure cities on many different airlines. Please call for details.*

The following services are included:

- Hotels:** 8 nights accommodation in first-class hotels. All hotel taxes and service charges included.
- Coaching:** All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary.
- Couriers:** Fully qualified Discover Europe courier throughout.
- Meals:** Continental breakfast daily, 4 dinners, 1 lunch, 1 wine tasting.
- Guides:** Local guides in Paris, Versailles, and Chartres.
- Entrances:** Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary.
- Insurance:** Complete travel insurance including cancellation coverage.





**Friday, April 8.** Evening departure from your international gateway city.

**Saturday, April 9.** Upon arrival in Paris, you will be met for the transfer to your hotel, where you'll have time to unpack and explore the neighborhood before the group gathers for a relaxing dinner. **(D)**  
**Overnight: Paris**

**Sunday, April 10.** From the meandering Seine, its strongly delineated Left and Right Banks lined with booksellers, to the staggering Gothic splendor of Notre Dame, to the delicate filigree of the Tour Eiffel, Paris comes to life in a swirl of superlatives. Our tour takes us through medieval streets that vie with sleek chic as we plunge into the ever-changing panorama of a vital, vibrant city that lives up to its romantic reputation, with highlights that include the celestial heights of Sacre Coeur, the wide boulevards of the Champs-Elysees, and the giddy majesty of the Arc de Triomphe. Our tour ends at the Louvre, where a local guide introduces us to the array of masterpieces

within. For lunch, you may decide to sample café life, and the rest of the day is free to explore. In the evening, sample one of the city's many superb restaurants—your time in the City of Light will fly by. **(B)**  
**Overnight: Paris**

**Monday, April 11.** Our morning begins with a short drive out of the city, and back in time, to Fontainebleau, a lovely chateau that started life in the 10<sup>th</sup> century as a hunting lodge and quickly became a favorite retreat of the Emperor Napoleon. In the late afternoon we'll return to Paris for a free evening. **(B)**  
**Overnight: Paris**

**Tuesday, April 12.** On our way to the lush Loire Valley we'll stop for the ultimate Gothic experience—Chartres Cathedral. Here, the transcendent beauty of medieval stained glass combines with soaring archways to create one of the great mystical experiences, and writer Malcolm Miller (if available) offers fascinating insights into the secret life of the cathedral. For lunch, you might try a local restaurant; we'll then continue on to our hotel in Amboise, where we'll meet for dinner. **(B, D)**  
**Overnight: Amboise**



*Versailles*

**Wednesday, April 13.** With its delicate light and mild climate, the Loire Valley is often considered the most quintessentially French of all regions. Medieval and Renaissance chateaux are scattered across the countryside, and we begin our day with a visit to the jewel of Amboise, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Chapelle St.-Hubert, that allegedly contains the tomb where Leonardo da Vinci is buried. From here, we'll tour the nearby Manoir du Clos-Luce, where Da Vinci lived for the last three years of his life. In the afternoon we'll visit the largest and most dramatic of the Loire chateaux; Chambord is a Renaissance masterpiece on a grand scale—440 rooms, a fireplace for every day of the year, intertwined staircases, and a project that demanded the labor of almost 2,000 workmen. The evening is free to sample a local restaurant. **(B)**  
**Overnight: Amboise**

**Thursday, April 14.** This morning we begin at the Chateau de Chenonceau, arguably the most romantic chateau in France. Built by women for women, this gem of Renaissance architecture spans the Cher River on a series of graceful arches. Continuing on this afternoon, we encounter one of the most famous chateaux of the Loire, the elegant Azay-le-Rideau. Returning to Amboise we'll meet for dinner near the hotel. **(B, D)**  
**Overnight: Amboise**

**Friday, April 15.** Following the Loire westwards, we drive to the Chateau de Villandry, rescued less than 100 years ago from the encroaching woodlands. Here, faithfully recreated 16<sup>th</sup>-century style gardens surround the chateau like a jewel box, with vegetables, fruit trees, and flowers laid out in an array of geometric patterns. We'll head into nearby Tours for lunch and to explore the town, wandering its ancient streets lined with half-timbered medieval buildings. We'll end our day with a wine tasting in a local vineyard, returning to our hotel in the late afternoon. This evening you're free to dine at the restaurant of your choice. **(B)**  
**Overnight: Amboise**



*Le Manoir les Minimes*

**Saturday, April 16.** As we wend our way back toward Paris, we'll stop in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the glory days of King Louis XIV. Versailles, the ultimate royal residence, occupied the talents of some of the great artists of the day, and it is a masterpiece of extravagance. We'll visit the royal apartments with a local guide, break for lunch, and then continue our exploration of Andre Le Notre's superb gardens, occupying some 247 acres, and the Queen's hamlet, where Marie Antoinette and her court play-acted at rural life. We continue on to Paris for a final night, checking in at our hotel, and meeting up for a farewell dinner. **(B, D)**  
**Overnight: Paris**

**Sunday, April 17.** Transfers this morning to Charles De Gaulle Airport for return flights to the USA. **(B)**