

The Loire valley's best kept secret

#jaimelanjou



anjou

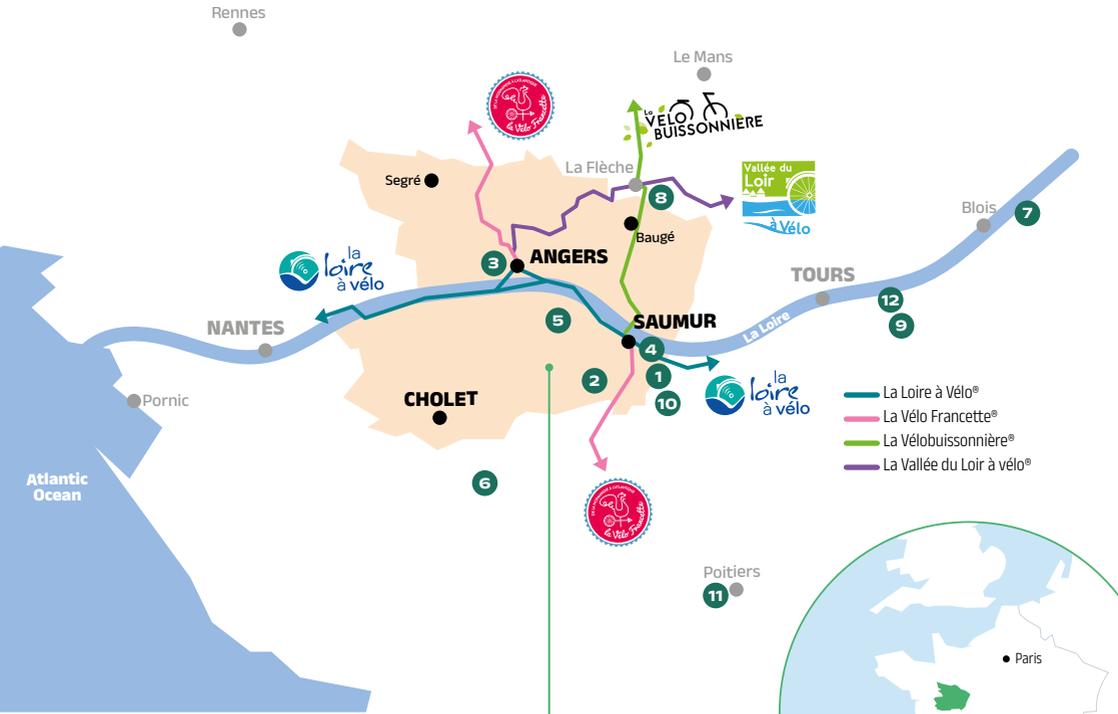
Welcome to



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anjou
Loire Valley

ANJOU



at the heart of Loire Valley!

Just a quick 1.5-hour high-speed train ride from Paris and the same distance from the Atlantic Ocean, Anjou is one of France's hidden gems and a must-see spot in the Loire Valley. Nestled between Nantes and Tours along the Loire River, Anjou is the perfect gateway to explore our unique UNESCO-recognised region and discover the numerous must-see castles scattered across the Loire Valley!

Main sites :

in Anjou

- 1 Royal Fontevraud abbey
- 2 Bioparc de Doué-la-Fontaine
- 3 Château d'Angers
- 4 Château de Saumur
- 5 Château de Brissac

out of Anjou

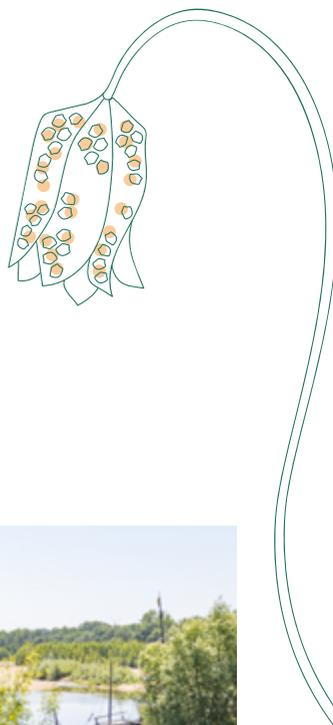
- 6 Puy du fou
- 7 Chambord castle & domain
- 8 La Flèche Zoo
- 9 Château de Chenonceau
- 10 Center Parcs - Le Bois aux Daims
- 11 Futuroscope
- 12 Château Royal d'Amboise

Get on your bike!

For all of you who consider your bike as your best companion and cherish the sense of freedom cycling brings... welcome to Anjou. We offer numerous paths alongside our many rivers for curious cyclists to explore.

Along the banks of the Loire, the **Loire à Vélo**® route is full of surprises. Between Montsoreau and Saumur, you can encounter remarkable troglodyte sites. Just south of Angers, make a pitstop at the Île de Chalennes, the largest inhabited island on the Loire. Here, the villagers enjoy life at a leisurely pace, guaranteeing happiness.

On the **Vélo Francette**® route, follow the Mayenne towpath to discover luxury bourgeois homes and lockmaster cottages; while the accommodations may differ in style, they all exude a certain charm! This gentle trail is also great for kids.



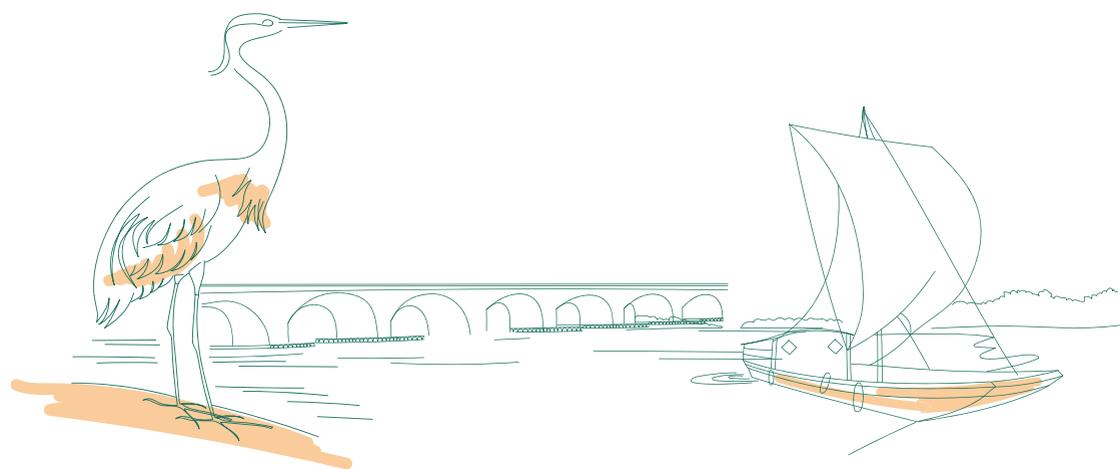
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All you need is Loire

A glimmering jewel beside which historical and architectural treasures stand, the Loire fascinates and appeals to many, even though it can be wild and impetuous at times. In Anjou, the stretch of the river up to Chalonnes-sur-Loire is classified as a **UNESCO World Heritage** site. Here, visitors wanting to explore the river can enjoy a myriad of activities.

Nothing beats lazing on the river banks, lulled by the sounds of flowing water and birds chirping in the trees. For stunning colours and breathtaking landscapes, head off for a drive along **La Route de la Loire**: this signposted route winds through villages nestled along the majestic river, offering splendid views. To truly get to know the Loire, set out on its waters. Your choice of vessel depends on which era you prefer, as modern canoes and stand-up paddleboards glide through the river's waters alongside traditional gabare boats. Gabares were historically used to transport goods on the river; today, gabariers continue to hoist the sails of these flat-bottomed boats for intimate cruises on the Loire and island exploration. With around fifteen passenger boats available for use on the river, it is the perfect opportunity for a short break to reconnect with nature.





©Christophe Mercier

Royal Fontevraud abbey

Originally a spiritual site then a prison, the Royal Fontevraud Abbey now stands as a historical and cultural site, resonating with echoes of bygone eras. Established in 1101, this abbey broke ground at the time as it was run by women for seven centuries, under the leadership of 36 abbesses. Discover the deep soul of **the abbey and its Museum of Modern Art**.

Eleanor of Aquitaine is the abbey's emblematic figure. Once the queen of France then queen of England, she came to Fontevraud to oversee the kingdom's affairs following Henry II's passing and chose it as her final resting place. The legacy of this powerful woman can still be felt in the abbey church today, where her recumbent statue rests alongside those of her husband, one of her sons, and daughter-in-law.

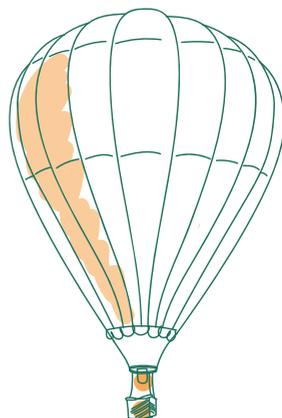
The abbey is home to a **fine dining restaurant** run by Michelin-starred and Bocuse d'Or award-winner, Thibaut Ruggeri. After a sumptuous meal, enjoy a night in the abbey's **luxury hotel**.

Valley of the kings

Anjou is home to more than **1,200 châteaux and manors**, once the meeting places of kings. Step into this royal history by touring these exceptional edifices. And be sure to visit Brissac, the loftiest château in France!

Dubbed the Giant of the Loire Valley, it boasts 204 rooms over 7 floors, and its peak reaches **48 metres high**. The castle's extravagance has not swayed the Marquis and Marchioness de Brissac, whose family has owned the castle since 1502. They work tirelessly to restore the château, host events and organise tours all year round.

Choose between Brissac, Le Plessis-Macé, Montgeoffroy, Serrant, Pouancé, Le Plessis-Bourré, Montreuil-Bellay, Baugé and many others... or visit them all!



204 rooms over 7 floors



21,400 hectares of vineyards

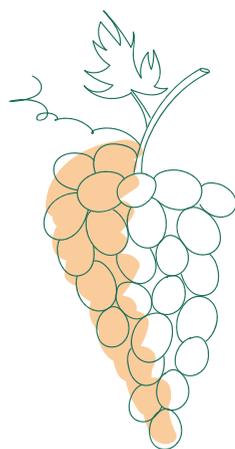
Fabulous vineyards

If exploring vineyards floats your fancy, you'll be delighted to know that Anjou has the widest range of wines in the Loire Valley. And there's no compromise on quality! With **32 Appellations** of Controlled Origin (AOC), Anjou is famous for its excellent production. Discover the 3rd-largest winemaking region in France, boasting 21,400 hectares of vineyards.

Anjou's mild microclimate of the Loire Valley and diverse soils ranging from schist to limestone create the perfect canvas for vineyards. Production boomed when the Plantagenet King Henry II of England began serving Anjou wines at his court. The white wines are predominantly made with **Chenin Blanc** grapes while the reds and rosés come from **Cabernet Franc**. And with a lengthy second fermentation in the bottle, the traditionally crafted sparkling wines are a treat to the palate!



©Mélodie Chaigneau



In Anjou, **6 scenic routes** wind through majestic vineyards and charming villages, spanning distances from 51 to 90 km. Each of these itineraries offers its own unique character. Be it uninterrupted views of the Loire river, trips into troglodyte caves, photo opportunities at the Château de Montreuil-Bellay, strolling, chatting or shopping in the villages, remember to take the time to savour each moment. These journeys are full of wonderful discoveries and great flavours to enjoy! What's more, these routes can be enjoyed by bike or by car!



City break

In **Angers**, visitors are often taken aback by the medieval fortress with its towers, ramparts, and the world-renowned, largest tapestry, now listed with UNESCO. Angers is hailed as the best French city to live in.

The numerous parks and gardens throughout the city play a role in creating this pleasant atmosphere.

Cholet sits close to the renowned Puy du Fou theme park. While its factory outlets make it a top destination for keen shoppers, the city also showcases its rich textile heritage with two museums highlighting this past. Just a heads up: you might want to update your wardrobe while you're there!

In **Saumur**, the elegant castle proudly overlooks the Loire river. After snapping a photo from the bridge, head into the town centre where the colourful half-timbered houses embody the purest of French tradition. Don't hesitate to leave the city to explore the Saumur wine region, celebrated for its exquisite white and Fines Bulles wines.





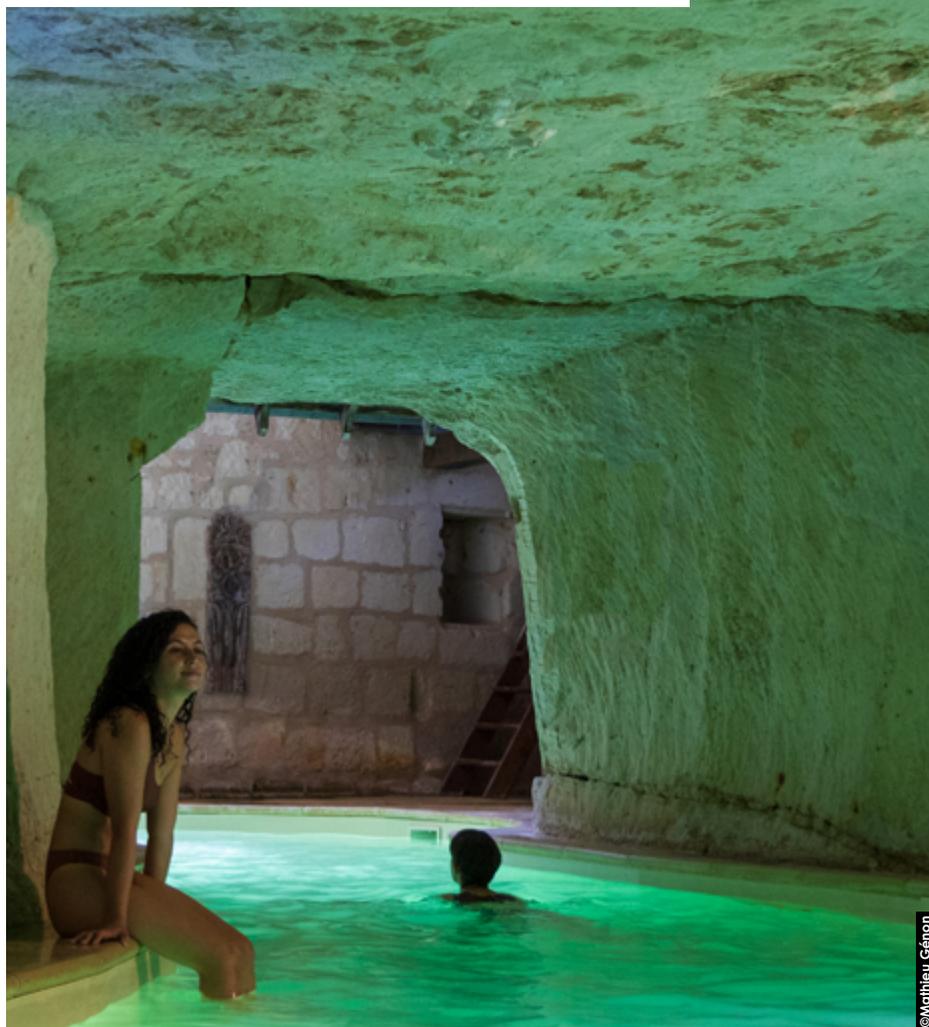
French villages

Keep an eye out for “Petites Cités de Caractère” and “Villages de Charme” signs; they will guide you to enjoyable walks around the villages of Anjou. Each of them has its own unique charm, perfect for wandering through narrow streets and soaking in historical heritage.

If you must pick only one village, we suggest **Montsoreau**, hailed as THE prettiest village in Anjou and a recipient of the “Plus Beau Village de France” award! Its château offers breathtaking views of the river. Along the banks of the Loire, explore other villages like the enchanting **Thourel** and further west of Angers, wander through **Saint-Florent-le-Vieil**'s alleyways before carrying on to Mont-Glonne for a splendid panoramic view of the valley. With fine examples of the world-famous troglodyte dwellings, **Turquant** is memorable for its remarkably restored site, where a Village des Métiers d'Art features artisans working their skills among the rocks. Last but not least, don't miss the surprising twisted bell towers in **Baugé**.

Surprising...

Believe it or not, living underground was quite comfortable: some residents have done so for centuries, and Anjou features many troglodyte homes and shops. Inside these carved rocky abodes, craftsmen, artists, restaurant owners and hoteliers are ready to provide experiences you'll remember for a lifetime! Accommodations like **La Demeure de la Vignole** even offer troglodyte swimming pools, the perfect place for a mix of relaxation and adventure.





nearly 20 metres high

... troglodytes!

The **Château de Brézé** might look unassuming, but it hides nearly a kilometre of cellar galleries.

At **Rochemenier**, the troglodyte village includes two old farms and an unusual underground chapel. The best plan is to enjoy these naturally air-conditioned places when the sun is at its peak. Art enthusiasts should come and admire the **Mystère des Faluns** at Les Perrières: an enchanting spectacle with sound and light projections in ribbed caves that are nearly 20 metres high, retracing the 10-million-year-old story of this site. Finally, the **Bioparc-Zoo** at Doué-la-Fontaine, the only troglodyte zoo in the world, is home to over 1,800 animals. The majestic giraffes stand tall in front of the beige walls of former quarries: a tone-on-tone spectacle that evokes intense emotions.



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Appetising Anjou

Anjou has many sweet specialities which will no doubt be joyfully received by your friends, such as the **Pâté aux Prunes**. Try a jar of "**pommes tapées**", apple-based dried fruit. Surprise your guests with a **Gouline**, a gourmet pie stuffed with Paris mushrooms, angevine shallots, and tomme cheese from Anjou, marinated in white wine. Impress them with a **Crémét d'Anjou** using whipped cream, whipped egg whites and a little sugar. The icing on the cake? Enjoying it with a summer fruits coulis. Bon appétit! Discover savoury delights in a gourmet open-air café and get a taste of the Douceur Angevine.

Famous liqueurs

Your glass will never stay empty for long in Anjou. Saint-Barthélémy-d'Anjou near Angers is the birthplace of the **Cointreau** liqueur. This orange-peel-based spirit has reinvented itself since 1849 and can be found in all kinds of cocktails in trendy bars.

Other liqueur makers have also preserved their roots and expertise in Anjou. In Saumur, **Combiar** started as a shop and sweet and jam factory before becoming a distillery in 1848 and offering flagship products such as their triple sec, known as l'Original. At **Giffard**, the minty flavour of the Menthe-Pastille® liqueur has made the house famous since 1885.





©Benoit Lemaire - le Cadre noir IFCE



Majestic Cadre noir

Saumur has become the standard-bearer of equestrian art. At the **Cadre Noir** (the French riding academy), instructors, known as *écuyers*, pass on centuries-old equestrian skills with rigour and grace. Several guided tours allow visitors a behind-the-scenes look at this long-standing institution. The performances they stage are truly poetic. Visitors cannot help but admire the evident complicity that unites the horses and riders, showcased through impeccable choreography.

Every year, the **Lion d'Angers racecourse** hosts the world's longest obstacle race on a magnificent estate, where the best and most beautiful horses compete in this exceptional event, from dressage to show jumping and cross-country.

Many other sporting and cultural events take place throughout the year in Anjou. Come and discover "Anjou Vélo Vintage" by bike and many others...



Anjou loves green

Was it King René's love for plants and flowers which he discovered during his Mediterranean travels? Was it the quality and diversity of the soil? Or perhaps his ambition to support a more sustainable world? Whatever drove him, Anjou today is now the capital of all things green. Journey to the very heart of this land, often nicknamed "the garden of France", which borrows inspiration from international influences.

Among the must-see spots are the Potager Colbert, Terra Botanica, the Chemins de la rose, Maulévrier Oriental garden, Camifolia, and a plethora of other beautiful gardens.



©Sébastien Gaudard



The Rivers of Western France

Embrace the essence of slow travel with cruising! Set out on a journey as gentle as a sunrise on a summer morning topped off with a hint of adventure as you take the helm of your vessel. With your partner, family or friends, charter your very own houseboat at Chenillé-Changé or Grez-Neuville marinas. Setting sail from these quaint villages with their slate-coloured roofs, make your way to Angers. Catch glimpses of the wildlife hiding in the grass on the riverbanks as you slowly sail by, wave hello to cyclists along the Mayenne towpaths and keep your ears open for the sounds of Anjou's traditional open-air restaurants, or "guinguettes", by the water's edge.



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