

PRESS RELEASE

DREAMING OF THE LOIRE:
A WEEKEND IN THE CHER VALLEY

Château de Chenonceau (© D. Darrault - CRT Centre-Val de Loire)

New York - September 22, 2020: Located in the heart of France's Loire Valley region is the Cher Valley, which encompasses the area from Chenonceau to Valençay. For now, would-be travelers can scout out their next trips to the iconic châteaux of the area, which wouldn't be complete without sampling the region's signature wine and goat cheese.

Chenonceau

One of the most famous châteaux in all of France - as well as the world - [Château de Chenonceau](#) is unique not only due to it being an architectural marvel, but also thanks to its legacy as the "Château des Dames." The château has always been owned by women, notably Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici, whose lasting touches and influences can be seen today. The exceptional gardens, named after both Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici, are today managed by American gardener Nicholas Tomlan, who takes inspiration from the ladies of the castle's past. As of last year, the château unveiled a recreation of Catherine de Medici's apothecary, where Nostradamus once prepared remedies for the queen. Visitors can also tour the château's own on-site floral workshop, where leading craftsman Jean-François Boucher creates daily flower arrangements to decorate the château. An incredibly unique way to see the château is by taking a boat ride directly under the château's iconic arches, along the Cher River, either by [canoe](#) or [boat](#). Or, see the château by air via a [hot air balloon ride](#) or [plane](#).



Canoeing along the Cher River is another unique way travelers can see the château

(© J.-F. Souchard - CRT Centre-Val de Loire)



Aerial view of Château de Nitrax (© Château de Nitrax)

Wine tasting stops in the area include the [Château de Nitrax](#), just 20 minutes from the château, located in a 106-acre landscaped park. Registered as a national heritage site since 1947, this Renaissance architectural masterpiece houses 25 acres of vineyards dating back three centuries, labelled AOC Touraine. For now, would-be travelers can experience the château via a virtual visit here: <http://www.chateau-nitrax.fr/en/the-castle/virtual-visit>. Another stop is [Château de Fontenay](#) in Bléré, an intimate château-hotel and vineyard, offering five rooms in the château, and three cottages located in the 42-acre park. Finally, at [Caves Monmousseau](#), visitors can try sparkling wines that have been perfected for over 130 years, while experiencing a very unique art show. In the underground cellars, images are illuminated on the tunnel walls, telling the story of the châteaux of the Loire through a spectacular sound and light show.

Foodie destinations include the gastronomic restaurant at [Auberge du Bon Laboureur](#) in the village of Chenonceaux and [Bistrot'quai](#), an open-air café located in a garden right by the water, open from May to September. Accommodations include the charming [La Folie Saint-Julien B&B](#), featuring five guest rooms, a garden, and an indoor pool located in a barn; and the [Château de Chissay](#), built in the 16th century as a royal residence under Charles VII and transformed into a hotel in 1986 with 27 guest rooms and five suites.



The vineyards at the Château de Fontenay (© Jean-Louis Carli)



A champignonnière in the Cave Champignonnière des Roches (© C. Lazi - CRT Centre-Val de Loire)

Bourré:

Sites to see in the Bourré area of the Loire Valley include the [Cave Champignonnière des Roches](#), which grows button, shitake and blue foot mushrooms; in fact, 40% of the world's blue foot mushrooms come from this farm. In total, 100 tons of high-quality mushrooms are produced here, all of which are harvested by hand. Other explorations include the [Troglo Degusto](#) wine cellar, where visitors can pair wine tastings of AOC Touraine-Chenonceaux with a stroll underground in a historic troglodytic cave site. For more wine tastings, [Domaine de la Chapinière](#) vineyard offers an equestrian center, vineyard and accommodations. Today, the domaine is part of the "Terra Vitis" association, an environmental certification ensuring they use sustainable practices. For families, a must-visit is the [ZooParc de Beauval](#), regarded as one of the best zoos in the world, which is home to over 35,000 animals. In 2020, they unveiled a massive new [Equatorial Dome](#), featuring 200 species in a bioclimatic structure, including saimiris, red ibis, and Komodo dragons.



Built in the 17th century, Château de Selles-sur-Cher is a historic chateau and winery (© Jacques Atten - Château de Selles-sur-Cher)



The goat cheese made in Selles-sur-Cher is often regarded as the best in France (© C. Lazi - CRT Centre-Val de Loire)

Selles-sur-Cher:

Some of France's best [goat cheese](#) can be found in Selles-sur-Cher, which is tangy and mild when young, becoming saltier and stronger when aged. [Fromagerie HUCHET](#) and [Palais du P'tit chèvre](#) in Châtillon-sur-Cher are top spots to find the cheese. Aside from tasting goat cheese, travelers should stop at [Château de Selles-sur-Cher](#), a historic chateau and winery with Renaissance Pavillons, a medieval castle and a farm.



Château de Valençay is one of the 22 major sites of the Loire Valley (© V. Trenay - CRT Centre-Val de Loire)



The Renaissance-style mansion of Domaine de Poulaines (© Arnaud Deplagne et Christophe Péan)

Valençay

Located just 20 minutes south of the Cher River is Valençay, known largely by name for its goat cheese and wine. The Valençay vineyards, which overlook the scenic Cher, have a long history, with the first written records dating back to 965. White Valençay is fresh and balanced, with a nose of citrus and flower; red Valençay is structured, fine and fresh on the palate; and rosé Valençay is flexible and structured. Top wine tasting spots include [Domaine Roy](#) and [Domaine Jourdain](#). A perfect pairing with Valençay wine, Valençay PDO goat cheese is made from whole, raw goat's milk, characterized by a truncated pyramid shape and a bluish gray rind. A top spot for cheese tasting is [Fromagerie Jacquin](#). Find more details on Valençay AOC here: <https://www.vins-fromages-valencay.fr/>

Aside from the wine and cheese pairings, travelers in the area should look to [Domaine de Poulaines](#) spanning 62 acres of woodlands including beautiful themed gardens and an arboretum (with more than 1,200 plants). Beautiful trees and boxwood surround a Renaissance mansion and a set of buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries. The [domaine](#) also offer overnight stays in private guest houses in the heart of the gardens.

Another must-visit is the [Château de Valençay](#), one of the 22 major sites of the Loire Valley, featuring both Renaissance and classic architecture, overlooking the Nahon Valley. The estate's 13-acre grounds feature traditional and modern gardens, a deer park, and a two-mile path along the "Forêt des Princes." The château hosts the Talleyrand Festival every two years (with the next festival taking place in 2021), showcasing ancient musical instruments.

Located less than ten minutes from the Château de Valençay, at the foot of the majestic ruins of a Renaissance castle in a charming flower-filled village, is [Restaurant Auberge St Fiacre](#). The restaurant is located in an authentic 17th-century house, transformed into a restaurant in the early 1970s, the restaurant today offers a selection of top local cuisine.