



London to the Loire

Springtime in England & Northern France

May 31st - June 12th, 2002

Southern England and Northern France are separated by the narrowest strait of water, but their cultures, landscapes and outlooks are worlds apart. This is your invitation to join Discover Europe's director, Christine Hoodith, on a journey through these two lands to some of their most treasured gardens and historic places.

We begin in London, pausing only briefly to catch our breath and visit a traditional East End flower market. Our road trip takes us into the heart of Kent, known as the Garden of England, and visits some of England's most intimate and beautiful gardens: Sissinghurst, Great Dixter, Bateman's and Smallhythe. Our charming hotel in the heart of ancient Rye is the perfect complement to our meandering days.

We cross under the English Channel through the "Chunnel" (from *Channel Tunnel*) on the Eurostar, the purpose-built train that is as elegant as it is swift. Our early afternoon arrival in Paris is followed by a panoramic tour of this most beautiful city. Our excursions from Paris include visits to Monet's Giverny and the commanding Palace of Versailles, its size and grandeur a marked contrast to our earlier visits. Free time in Paris allows you to explore at your own pace and Chris will always be available to help with suggestions and advice.

The Loire Valley is known as the Garden of France, a landscape of extraordinary beauty, tempered by the

The Chateau of Chenonceau



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

Land only (no airfare included): **\$2550**
The single supplement is **\$450**

The following services are included:

- i) 11 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels, all rooms with private facilities.
- ii) 11 full English/Continental breakfasts.
- iii) 8 table d'hote dinners, 3 courses + coffee.
- iv) Discover Europe's Christine Hoodith as courier.
- v) All ground transportation by private minicoach as detailed in the itinerary.
- vi) First-class Eurostar ticket, Ashford-Paris.
- vii) Local guide for half-day panoramic sightseeing of Paris.
- viii) P & O ferry crossing, Cherbourg-Portsmouth, with seat reservations.
- ix) All entrances to sites featured in the itinerary.
- x) Portage of one suitcase per person.
- xi) Fully comprehensive travel insurance, inc. cancellation.
- xii) All hotel taxes & service charges.

Please note: Airfares are available from many other US departure cities, please enquire for details.

warm, moist breezes from the Atlantic. We settle in to our Loire hotel and visit a number of the grand chateaux that dot this valley; a highlight will certainly be the extraordinary flower and vegetable gardens at Villandry.

Changing pace, we turn north and make our way to the coast of Normandy. We visit the D-Day Beaches and spend a day at Mont St. Michel. We return to England over sea, on an express ferry from Cherbourg to Portsmouth, and from there we make our way back to London for a final evening of merriment.

This spring explore the beauty and wonder of England and Northern France, from *London to the Loire*. Chris will be delighted to welcome you and introduce you to some of her very favorite places!



Day 01, Fri 31st May Departures this evening from your US gateway on overnight flights to London. **Overnight: Plane**

Day 02, Sat 1st June Upon arrival at London's Gatwick or Heathrow Airports, you'll be met for the transfer to our central London hotel. Time to rest from the flight before a stroll round the neighborhood with Chris. This evening we gather for drinks in the bar before our opening dinner party. Welcome to London! **(D)** **Overnight: London**

Day 03, Sun 2nd June We leave London this morning, pausing at the Columbia Road flower market, one of London's most colorful and best-kept secrets - and Chris's favorite local market. We continue south to the luscious green of Kent and a visit to Vita Sackville-West's extraordinary garden at Sissinghurst. After lunch we spend the afternoon at Christopher Lloyd's celebrated garden at Great Dixter before journeying on to Rye and our historic coaching inn for dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Rye**

Day 04, Mon 3rd June After a leisurely exploration of the cobbled lanes of Rye this morning, we visit Bateman's, home of the Nobel Prize-winning author Rudyard Kipling. The 17th-century house, laid out as Kipling left it, is set in beautiful gardens. Following a country pub lunch we continue to Smallhythe Place, the early Tudor timber-framed home of the actress Ellen Terry with delightful rose gardens. We return to our hotel with time to freshen up before dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Rye**

Day 05, Tue 4th June This morning, we catch the Eurostar train at Ashford in Kent for our journey to Paris. We'll lunch on the train; upon arrival in the French capital we'll check into our hotel and stretch our legs before our local Parisian guide takes us on a tour of the sights of this most elegant city. Dinner at a restaurant near our hotel. **(B, L, D)** **Overnight: Paris**

Day 06, Wed 5th June Today we drive out to Giverny, the exquisite garden that Monet planted and then painted in every changing mood and season. We'll pause to admire the dramatic ruins of Chateau Gaillard, built by Richard the Lionheart, before returning to Paris early afternoon. The evening is free to sample a local restaurant. **(B)** **Overnight: Paris**

Day 07, Thur 6th June A morning excursion to Versailles, the palace that set the standard for royal residences for centuries to come. We'll tour the state apartments and then have time to explore the formal gardens and terraces. There will be time to have lunch before our return to Paris for a free afternoon. This evening we gather at the hotel and travel by coach to the Eiffel Tower where we'll dine on the first level. After dinner the more intrepid amongst us can take the elevator even higher to the third level for the most breathtaking panorama of Paris by night. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Paris**

Day 08, Fri 7th June This morning we leave Paris for the gentle beauty of the Loire Valley. First we stop at Chartres and visit the cathedral with over 150 medieval stained-glass windows. Time to explore the delightful back streets of Chartres before we journey into the heart of the Loire, with visits to the Chateaux of Chenonceau, mirrored in the river, and Amboise, where Leonard da Vinci lies buried. We dine together this evening at a local restaurant. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Loire Valley**

Day 09, Sat 8th June A relaxed start to the day with free time to explore the town of Amboise before we drive to Azay-le-Rideau for lunch and a visit to its pretty Chateau. Later this afternoon we explore the spectacular gardens of the Chateau de Villandry, before returning to Amboise for a free evening. **(B)** **Overnight: Loire Valley**

Day 10, Sun 9th June North into Normandy today, passing through Le Mans, famous as the home of motor-racing. We'll pause as we journey through the cider-orchards and wooded valleys to Bayeux. We'll check into our hotel and have time for lunch before driving the short distance to the coast. This was the scene of France's liberation in 1944 when forces from America, Canada and Britain poured onto the Normandy beaches. After walking these historic beaches, an emotional and unforgettable experience, we'll return to Bayeux for dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Bayeux**

Day 11, Mon 10th June An excursion today to Mont St. Michel, the fabulous island monastery that towers up from the surrounding salt marsh and is completely surrounded by the ocean at high tide. We'll return to Bayeux mid-afternoon and admire its famous tapestry, the record of William of Normandy conquering the English at Hastings in 1066. The evening is free in Bayeux. **(B)** **Overnight: Bayeux**

Day 12, Tues 11th June A short drive this morning takes us to Cherbourg, where our express ferry to Portsmouth has us back on English soil by the early afternoon, a crossing of just under three hours. We arrive at our London hotel for a free afternoon and time to relax before we gather for an undoubtedly rowdy farewell dinner! **(B, D)** **Overnight: London**

Day 13, Wed 12th June Departure day and transfers back to the London airports for returning flights home. **(B)**

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