

# Loches Cité royale



TWICE AS MANY STORIES

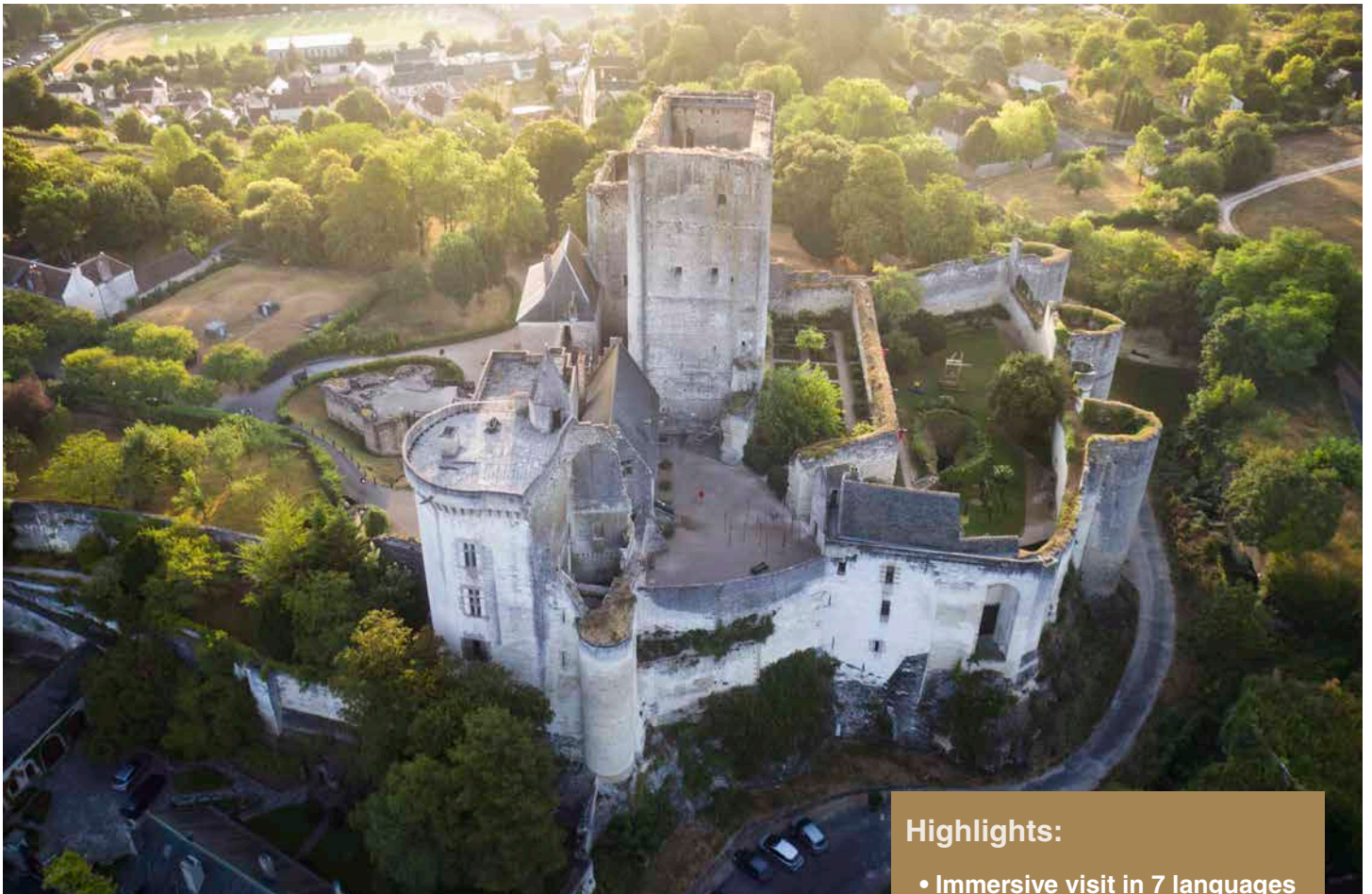
PROFESSIONALS

2023

Un site du Conseil départemental d'Indre & Loire

TOURAINES  
LE DÉPARTEMENT





#### Highlights:

- Immersive visit in 7 languages
- Mecca of French history
- 2 unique monuments: an 11<sup>th</sup> century dungeon and a 15<sup>th</sup> century royal residence

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### Not to be missed

- The dizzying climb to the dungeon
- The underground
- The iron cage
- The panoramic view from the top of the new tower
- Discovering the patio overlooking the Val de l'Indre

# Two monuments for a unique experience

While Renaissance castles abound in the Loire Valley, medieval cities are much rarer. Loches houses one of the most beautiful fortified cities in France, with a remarkable infrastructure and dungeon, and dominates both the city and the pastoral Indre Valley. This jewel of medieval architecture once welcomed Joan of Arc and Anne of Brittany, and it was home to the favourite and chief mistress of Charles VII, Agnes Sorel.

In the landscape of Loire Valley castles, the 37-meter dungeon is an unusual structure. It is a masterpiece of eleventh-century military architecture and one of the best preserved of its kind in Europe. Its many painted and engraved inscriptions immerse visitors in prison life of the era.

The site offers a unique tour that uses sound, visuals, and digital media to introduce visitors to important figures and architectural features.



# One site, two monuments

The two monuments -- the residence and the dungeon -- are the property of the Indre and Loire departmental council and have been grouped together under a common designation: the Royal City. This name refers to the monuments' topography (a fortified city) and their history (royal, if we consider the number of sovereigns who passed through or resided in Loches in the late Middle Ages).

## A Visit Back in Time

These attractive and varied interactive features deal with different themes -- iconic figures, how these spaces were used, architectural details, etc. -- and are designed for all our visitors.

## An immersion in five centuries of history

### Visiting the Residence

- The first floor of the residence is the main space that has been staged.
- The visit emphasizes the different spaces through lighting, soundscapes, special furnishings (bed, platform, canopy), and multimedia (sound seating, projections).

### Visiting the Dungeon

- The Round Tower and the Martelet Tower are the main spaces that have been staged.
- Both theme-based spaces are introduced with special lighting, a lectern, and sound cues.
- The visit includes multimedia (touchscreens, sound cues) and hands-on activities (a chessboard).

> Mediation media  
FR/GB

> Access plan in 7  
languages FR/EN/  
DE/IT/ES/NL/RU



# The Dungeon

## A dive into the prison world of the late Middle Ages

Erected in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to defend the vulnerable side of the fortress, the dungeon is an impressive structure that, together with the Round Tower and the Martelet Tower, forms an imposing ensemble that can be reached from the royal residence via the alleys of the medieval city. The top of the dungeon offers visitors a spectacular view.

## Towers

### The Dungeon of Loches

This “palace tower” is impressive thanks to its dimensions, level of comfort (lighting, fireplaces, latrines), and careful construction. It is a gem of medieval castle architecture.

For a structure built in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Dungeon of Loches, which stands 37 meters tall, is also remarkably well preserved.

Equipped with a complex circulation system, the main tower was heated by stacking fireplaces and illuminated by numerous arched windows.

### The Martelet Tower

The Martelet Tower seems to have been destined for incarceration from its very inception. The lower part of the tower is built directly into the side of the rocky outcrop, which houses a network of galleries.

## The Dungeon Cage

When he arrived in 1460, Louis XI completed a transformation -- already begun under Charles VII -- of the dungeon of Loches into a royal prison. The military site become a place of confinement. The king's (contested) reputation for cruelty towards his enemies was linked to a symbol: "iron cages". There is a full-scale reproduction of one of the iron cages here. A new visitor experience includes an 8-question quiz on what is fact and what is fiction when it comes to these cages.

## The New Tower



The New Tower was built in the fifteenth century and is made up of different spaces: **the interpretation room, A Place, A History, the 'If Walls Could Talk' room**, which covers the dungeon's history and major stages of construction over five centuries, the **Dungeon of the Eccentrics** which gives visitors a chance to see and understand one of the uses of the state prison in the eighteenth century. Finally, the **duel room** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the round tower, with its exceptional graffiti dating from the troubled period of the wars of religion in the second part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the **dungeon of the rebels**, which presents the atypical fate of Duke John II of Alençon (1409-1476), companion of Joan of Arc, accused of the crime of "lèse-majesté" against his sovereign and royal cousin Charles VII. The New Tower ends with a patio offering a remarkable panoramic view of the city.

## EXTRAORDINARY... PRISON ART

Graffiti from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (house, mill, lighthouse) are remnants from when the Round Tower served as a departmental jail.

Graffiti in the Martelet Tower prove that the structure was used as a jail in the from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Here, one can find pencil drawings and inscriptions, engravings of crucifixes, a church, a ship, faces, profiles, crosses, tools, and even a large inscription in Latin.

## D A T E S

### 1013 — 1035

**Fulk III, the Black**, Count of Anjou, built a **four-tiered** quadrangular dungeon overlooking the castle's southern front.



### 1440 — 1460

**Charles VII** built a gate tower and a new main tower (the **Round Tower** or "new tower").



SECOND  
HALF  
FROM  
THE 15<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY

Construction  
of the  
**Martelet  
Tower**,  
probably

during the reign of Louis XI.

### 1452-1508

**Ludovico Sforza**, Duke of Milan.

The Duke of Milan, rival to the kings of France and great patron of Leonardo da Vinci was held captive in the prison of Loches for 4 years. He died there.





# Travel through time!

## HistoPad® opens the doors of time to plunge visitors into the Middle Ages.

Thanks to digital technology and the latest innovations in augmented reality, visiting the thousand-year-old dungeon of Loches has become a unique experience for all to enjoy!

### Restoring architectural features that are now missing

Spaces that either no longer exist or that have been transformed are brought back to life for visitors to enjoy: sieged ramparts and battle sites, spaces under construction, a plunge into medieval jails, a large dungeon room from the eleventh century. Today, this space on the main floor of the main tower, which once served as a ceremonial, audience, and banquet hall, has no floor or ceiling. An eleventh-century administrative scene is now depicted here featuring Fulk III, the Black, Count of Anjou surrounded by lords of his army.

### Immersing visitors in an atmosphere

This is probably the most spectacular feature of the HistoPad®: 360° immersion experiences of spaces, fitted out with period furnishings and recalling the ambience of the time, as visitors explore the premises. Visitors can now set foot on medieval battlefields and peek in on Count Fulk III's private chamber! There are 10 immersive experiences in the dungeon of Loches.

### A Fun Visit

Children can take part in a treasure hunt, while bigger kids can take historical selfies. This monument is a fun and experiential place for shared moments.

### New in 2023

2 new renovated spaces, including the cell in the Dungeon of Loches where Ludvico Sforza, Duke of Milan and patron of Leonardo da Vinci, was imprisoned and died. Bring the space to life with augmented reality on the HistoPad!

### Bonus features:

All visitors are given the opportunity to use this experiential device, which is included in the monument's entrance fee.

Available in 7 languages: French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch and Russian.



# The Royal Residence

## A Mecca of French History

A gem of late medieval architecture (a radiant and flamboyant Gothic style), the royal residence of Loches features a terraced façade overlooking a City of Art and History. Visitors enjoy a sweeping view of the Indre Valley and the vast Loches Forest.

Many historical figures and influential women have left their marks on Loches, which was a favourite residence and recreation home for members of the House of Valois. It includes two parts, with structures from different periods: the residence of Louis I of Anjou (14<sup>th</sup> century), which was extended under Charles VIII and Louis XII with the Anne of Brittany residence (15<sup>th</sup> century).

- Joan of Arc met Charles VII there. After forcing the English to lift the siege of Orleans on 8 May 1429, at the end of May 1429, Joan of Arc went to meet the king who was then residing in Loches in order to convince him to receive "a worthy crown" in Reims. She shook off his apathy and captivated him with her charisma and persuasion.
- As the queen of France, Anne of Brittany made frequent trips to the Royal City of Loches, leaving her mark on the edifice with her commission of a flamboyant Gothic style oratory. Through her court, she generated an artistic output that would leave a mark on her era. The decorations in the room dedicated to Anne of Brittany are a testament to her influence.
- Agnes Sorel met Charles VII in 1443. From a small Picardy nobility, she was the next in line at the court of the Duchess of Anjou and captivated the king with her beauty and wit. Charles VII brought her into the service of his wife, Marie d'Anjou, and she became his favourite.

## THE GREAT HOURS OF ANNE OF BRITTANY

In 1508, Anne of Brittany ordered a painting by the Tours native Jean Bourdichon (1457-1521), who was a "painter and valet to the king". Bourdichon created this masterpiece comprising 476 pages and 337 border illuminations known as The Great Hours of Anne of Brittany. This book of prayers is a summary of the fauna and flora that Anne enjoyed every day in the Amboise, Blois, and Loches gardens. At once a spiritual book and a natural encyclopedia, this artefact is part of a display that brings life to its images.



This facsimile dating from 1841 and printed in just a few copies is kept in the collections of the Royal City. This book was beautifully restored by Olivier Maupin, a restorer of old books and graphic documents and founder of the Training Centre for the Restoration of Written Heritage (CFRPE).





## ZOOM ON ...

### AGNES SOREL, LA DAME DE BEAUTE (LADY OF BEAUTY) (1422–1450)

Agnes was a woman of letters and a great beauty whose looks were famous among her contemporaries. In fact, the Tours painter Jean Fouquet depicted her beauty in his Melun Diptych.

At court, Agnes Sorel acted as a patron and accompanied the king on his travels and stays in Touraine.

Her extravagant clothing and particularly her status as the king's official favourite mistress scandalized the court. Madly in love, the king lavished her with jewels and land, making her a princess without the title. When the king was at his Loches residence, she was at his side, while Queen Marie of Anjou remained at the fortress in Chinon.

Agnes Sorel brought faithful and committed advisers into Charles VII's entourage who served the interests of the kingdom and helped strengthen royal power.

When rumours emerged of a plot against the king, an alarmed Agnes Sorel, pregnant with her fourth child, joined Charles VII in Jumieges where he was camping with his army. That is where she met her untimely death (at around age 28) due to "stomach troubles". The circumstances surrounding her death are still a mystery.

In 2005, under the leadership of Dr. Philippe Charlier, 22 French doctors and scientists studied the skeletal remains of Agnes de Sorel, showing acute mercury poisoning to be her cause of death, but there is no evidence as to whether or not she was murdered. Rumours suggested she was poisoned under orders by the future Louis XI, then the Dauphin, but no one knows the truth. A marble and alabaster recumbent effigy, which lies in the Collegiate Church Saint-Ours, was beautifully restored to its original condition during a restoration campaign in 2015/2016.



## ZOOM ON ...

### LOUIS XI (Bourges, 1423 - 1460 Plessis-Lès-Tours, 1483)

As the son of Charles VII, he was brought up in the royal house in Loches where he was immersed in the intrigues of the court.

He accompanied his father on hunting trips and attended the campaigns and negotiations that marked the end of the Hundred Years' War.

But his relationship with his father was strained. In particular, he was critical of his father's affair with Agnès Sorel. The heir apparent actively conspired to thwart the king's authority. He joined the rebellion of great feudal lords

(Alençon, Anjou, Bourbon) against Charles VII. The Praguerie (1440) saw the captain and the royal garrison of Loches turn against the king. The king was forced to send his troops to win back his "good city". Louis became a threat and was exiled to the Dauphiné by the king (1447).

Upon his accession to the throne (1461), Louis XI completed a transformation -- already begun under Charles VII -- of the dungeon of Loches into a royal prison. He also completed the reinforcement of the site with the construction of the Martelet Tower and the barbican. His (disputed) reputation for cruelty towards his enemies is embodied by the symbol of the iron cages he used (the "*fillettes d'roi*" or "king's little girls" were actually shackles that were placed around prisoners' necks) and which popular depictions have often placed in the enclosure of the Loches keep.

Scenographic tour: April to November 2023.



# The Medieval-Inspired Garden

## A Green Oasis at the Foot of the Dungeon

Recreated from illuminations and the structural elements of Middle-Age gardens, this walled garden reveals the three functions they used to have: nourishing, healing and relaxing. It is composed of eight squares of plants classified according to the colour of their flowers. It is lined with branches of braided chestnut and contains medicinal, dyeing and vegetable plants. Fruit trees and shrubs (apple, pear, raspberry, currant and blackcurrant) also flourish there.

The garden has evolved since it was created. Some plants have flourished, while others have been replaced. It is preceded by an antechamber where a mulberry tree is planted and which also houses a "high meadow", a grassy bench shaded by a vine trellis, where irises, acanthus and hollyhocks flower.

## The Gonzague Saint-Bris Space

*The garden was renamed in homage to Gonzague Saint-Bris (1948-2017), a man of letters born in Loches and founder of "La forêt des livres" (The Forest of Books) in Chanceaux-près-Loches.*

Themed tours are organised to help you discover all the richness of this unexpected 700 m<sup>2</sup> garden, especially during **Rendez-Vous at the Gardens**. Participate in workshops on eco-responsible cultivation techniques, or flower folding and repotting for the little ones!



# Calendar



## APRIL TO NOVEMBER

### [Exhibition] LOUIS XI

On the occasion of the 600th anniversary of King Louis XI, an original scenographic tour will tell the story of one of the most important historical figures in the Royal City of Loches.

## June

### Rendez-Vous at the Gardens

An invitation to discover the medieval garden, an oasis of greenery at the foot of the impressive thousand-year-old dungeon. Workshops and discoveries all day.

## August

### The Medieval Days of Loches

The Royal City of Loches comes alive with games and activities to help visitors rediscover the Middle Ages: camping, games, shows, a medieval market in the upper town during the second weekend in August.

## December

### Christmas in the Land of Castles

#### The Winter Tales of the Royal City.

Through the programme "Christmas in the Land of Castles", the Royal City extends an invitation to revisit the folk tales that have shaped the contemporary imagination around Christmas. Throughout the month of December, visitors can (re)discover the characters of the tale in a conducive setting for the imagination (scenery and activities).

The Royal City organises workshops and special visits for all ages throughout the year.  
Find all the details on [www.citeroyaleloches.fr](http://www.citeroyaleloches.fr)

Call +33 (0)2 47 19 18 08 for more information and to book  
[resaloches@departement-touraine.fr](mailto:resaloches@departement-touraine.fr)

# Programming and Activities/ Visiting Experiences

## Visit the Royal City of Loches

Discovering a castle should be a unique experience that you can enjoy as a family, with friends, in a group, or by yourself.

### INDIVIDUALS

#### Self-guided

With map/guidebook available in 7 languages  
Duration 2 hours


#### Multimedia guided tour

Immersive Augmented Reality Tour of the Dungeon with Histopad© available in 7 languages  
Recommended Duration: 1.5 hours  
Included in the monument entrance fee.

#### Guided tour

Duration 1 hour (one monument) or 1.5 hours to discover the other monument on your own.  
Seasonal hours of operation (please contact us)  
Included in the ticket price.

#### Family visit

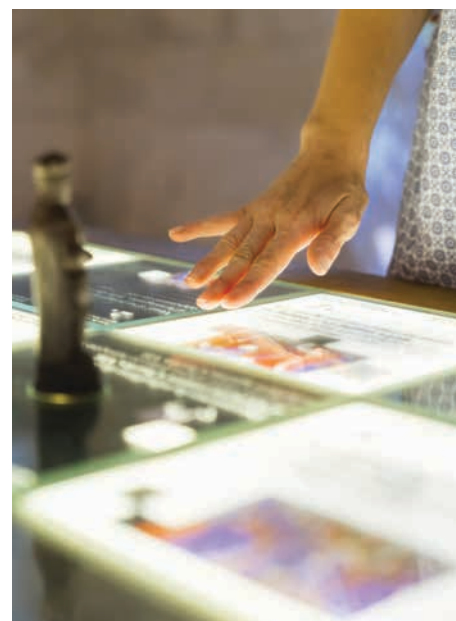
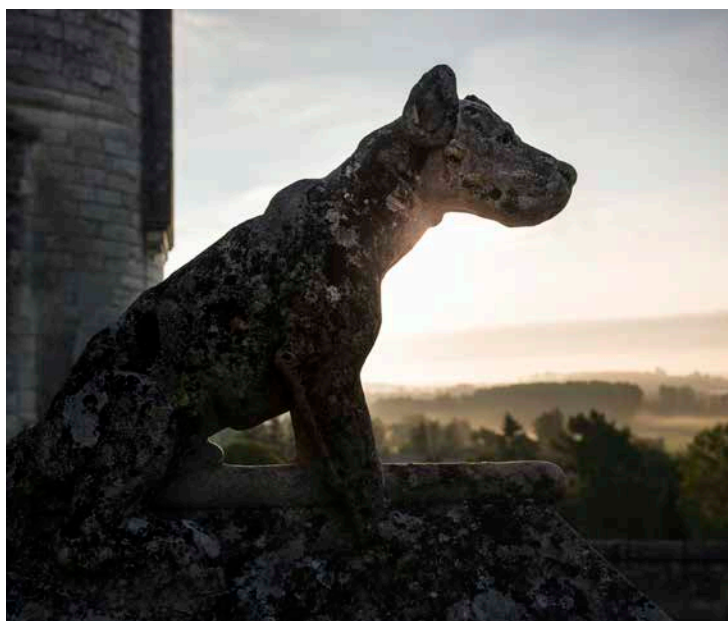
Special family fun visit during the school holidays and every weekend in May/June (children 3-12 years old) - By reservation. 

Programme available for children from kindergarten through secondary school age, in coordination with teachers from the French national system: Guided tour, thematic tour, or workshop.

### SCHOOLS

Fee from €1.5/student and up to €4/student for workshops.

See our **discovery** brochure for our range of educational and cultural programmes on <https://www.citeroyaleloches.fr/activites-pedagogiques>



## GROUPS

15 people and more - (Visit can be personalized for fewer than 15 people at an additional cost. Please contact us.) **Booking required**

### Self-guided

With map/guidebook available in 7 languages  
Duration 2 hours



### Immersive visit with Histopad

Immersive visit with augmented reality of the Dungeon with Histopad, available in 7 languages  
Recommended Duration: 1.5 hours  
Included in the monument entrance fee.



### Guided tour - By half groups of 25 people

Duration 1.5 hours  
Included in the monument entrance fee



### Thematic guided tours

- Preconceptions about the Middle Ages
  - France and Spain (Charles V): Rival Kingdoms
  - Ludovico Sforza: An Imprisoned Patron
- Duration 1.5 hours - Admission fee + €2.50



### Special Tour - Groups of 12 to 20 people

Let your imagination roam through privatized spaces!

Meet in the late afternoon (30 minutes before the site closes to the public), for a unique sensory and tasty visit.

Duration: 2 hours 15 minutes

Fee €28 / €30.

April, May, June, and September.

For more information, please contact us.



### Schools

Programme available for children from kindergarten through secondary school age, in coordination with teachers from the French national system: Guided tour, thematic tour, or workshop.

Fee from €1.50/student and up to €4/student for workshops.

See our discovery brochure for our range of educational and cultural programmes on <https://www.citeroyaleloches.fr/activites-pedagogiques>

## Services

### Guided tour with no extra charge

Capacity of up to 50 people (in half-groups of 25 people)

### Free coach and bus parking

A 10-minute walk

### Dining options

In the heart of the Royal City in season and in the lower town all year round  
Shops in the lower town.

### “Bicycle Friendly” & “Loire à vélo” site

- > Located less than 5 km from a bike route
- > Facilities for cyclists: secure bike shelter, repair kit



**Outdoor venue rental capacity: 500 people**  
**From €900.**  
**Please contact us for a quote.**

# Practical information

Open all year  
(except 25 December and 1<sup>January</sup>)  
Days and Hours of Operation:  
Jan., Feb., Dec.: 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
March, April, Sept., Oct.: 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
1 May-31 August: 9:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
*Timetables are subject to change in 2023, see [www.citeroyaleloches.fr](http://www.citeroyaleloches.fr)*  
Full: €10.50  
Reduced: €8.50  
Free driver and guide for 15 paying visitors  
Ages 7-18: groups, clubs, organizations,  
employee benefit schemes  
Professional rate: €7.50  
Thematic tour + €2.50  
Special Tours: €27 / €30  
School Groups: from €1.50 /student  
Workshops: €4 to €9  
Free for children under 7  
Last ticket sold 30 minutes before closing.

## E-tickets: Professionals

Please visit our special platform for purchasing tickets for groups at our professional rates

> Log in to

**[www.citeroyaleloches.fr](http://www.citeroyaleloches.fr), "tickets" tab, then my professional space** Your registration will be confirmed within 3 working days.

You will then be able to access our online reservation platform for professionals and buy your tickets. E-tickets must be printed and presented when customers arrive at the monument.

Tickets are valid for 1 year. 10 tickets per year minimum

## Getting here



### FROM TOURS

D943, direction Châteauroux -  
40 minutes south of Tours

### FROM PARIS

A10, exit 18, towards Amboise (D976) then  
towards Loches (D31)

### From Bordeaux

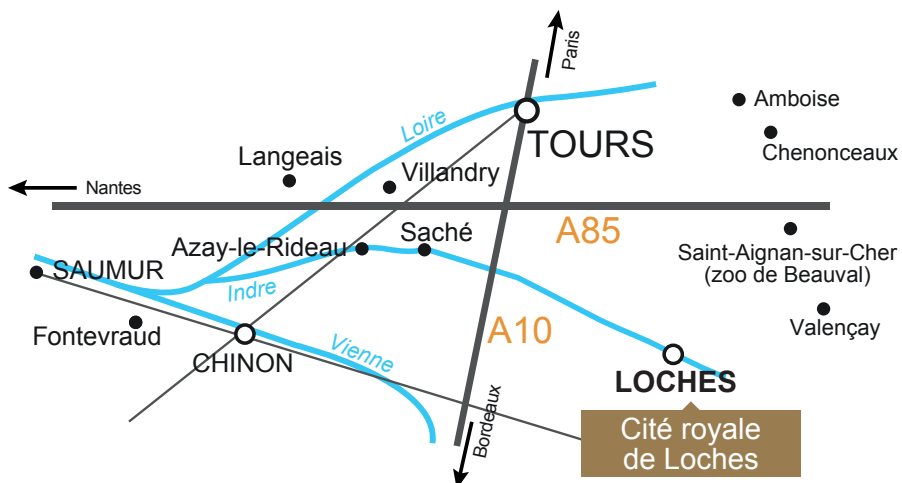
A10 exit 25 Sainte-Maure-de-Touraine then  
D760

### Things to see nearby:

Chateau de Chenonceau - 30 minutes  
Chateau Royal d'Amboise - 40 minutes  
Beauval Zoo - 35 minutes  
Museum of Prehistory of Grand  
Pressigny - 35 minutes  
Chateaux de Valençay, Montresor,  
Montpoupon, Bouges, Domaine de  
Poulaines, and Lansyer Museum.

### Prepare your stay

[www.loches-valde Loire.com](http://www.loches-valde Loire.com)  
[www.touraineloirevalley.com](http://www.touraineloirevalley.com)



# Sales Contact

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## Bookings

Royal City of Loches - 37600 Loches

Bookings: + 33 (0)2 47 19 18 08

[www.citeroyaleloches.fr](http://www.citeroyaleloches.fr)

[citeroyaleloches@departement-touraine.fr](mailto:citeroyaleloches@departement-touraine.fr)



Loches  
Cité royale

