

Loire Valley & Central France

WORLD-RENOWNED CHÂTEAUX AND FINE WINES may be the two most obvious reasons to visit central France, but they're only the tip of the iceberg. This region was also once the site of Europe's grandest volcanoes, its largest concentration of cave dwellings and some of its finest medieval architecture. When you've had your fill of château gawking and vineyard hopping, make some time for roads less travelled: wind through the Auvergne's magnificent landscape of green pastures and vestigial cinder cones; go underground to discover the Loire's ancient troglodyte culture; or spend a week exploring Burgundy's medieval churches, abbeys and walled towns.

Central France is also prime walking and cycling country; look for paths wherever you go.

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Classic Trip

11 Châteaux of the Loire 5 Days

Tour France's greatest châteaux, from austere medieval towers to exuberant royal palaces. (p137)

12 Caves & Cellars of the Loire 3 Days

Discover the Loire's subterranean world: wine cellars, cave dwellings and mushroom farms. (p147)

13 Volcanoes of the Auvergne 4 Days

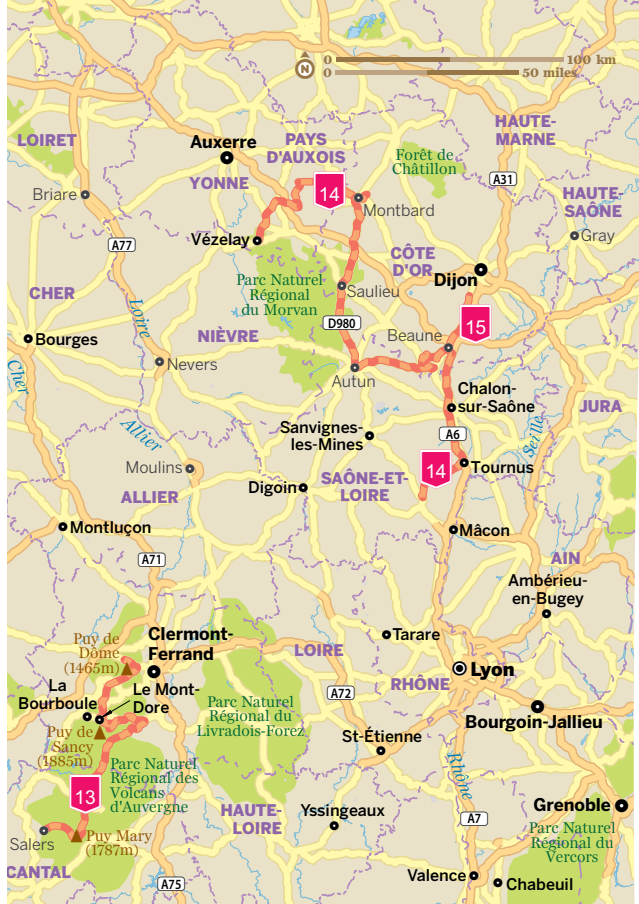
Green pastures, volcanic scenery, fabulous hiking and some of France's finest cheeses. (p157)

14 Medieval Burgundy 6 Days

Search for medieval treasures in Burgundy's churches, monasteries and fortified villages. (p165)


15 Route des Grands Crus 2 Days

Sample France's most venerable vintages on this wine lover's tour of Burgundy. (p173)





DON'T MISS


Hôtel Grand St-Michel, Chambord

Wake up to sunrise over Chambord's turrets and stroll the grounds before the tour buses arrive. Stay here on Trip 


Chapelle Ste-Radegonde, Chinon

Behind a red door in a stone wall is a cave church with 12th-century frescos. Discover it on Trips  


Ancient Green Volcanoes, Auvergne

The Auvergne's three dormant volcanoes are a hiker's paradise. Climb them on Trip 

Temptation of Eve, Musée Rolin, Autun

This startlingly sensual image is the work of 12th-century stone carver Gislebertus. See it on Trip 

Caveau de Puligny-Montrachet

Sample some of Burgundy's extraordinary white wines without breaking the bank. Enjoy on Trip 



Amboise Château Royal d'Amboise (Trip 11)