



SADDLETRAVEL.COM

Heritage & Gastronomy Trail in Sancerre

Weight limit: 90 kilos

Nearest airport: Paris

7 days / 6 nights / 6 days riding



Imagine... Vines as far as the eye can see, picturesque streets and historic monuments, full of secrets. Around Sancerre, a town with a medieval heart and a rich history, you will ride from villages to hamlets, nestling among the hillsides. From vineyards to medieval centre, Sancerre is a charming old medieval town where you can stroll along picturesque streets. Recognised as one of the oldest vineyards in France, Sancerre is also the name of an elegant wine with its own

appellation of origin since 1936. The Sancerre region also boasts another well known pillar of French gastronomy: the "Crottin de Chavignol", a goat cheese that goes perfectly with a Sancerre Blanc made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes. Embark on this heritage and gastronomy trail in the heart of France, riding among History!



The Riding

The pace on this trail is varied to suit the terrain, with long periods of walk and plenty of opportunities to canter and gallop. The scenery encompasses rolling hills, green, sun-drenched vineyards, woods and forests. Riders must be comfortable at all paces and happy to do some fast riding in open spaces on an obedient and responsive horse. Riders need to be in good physical condition, you will be in the saddle for between 4-6 hours per day.

Guides & Group sizes

As well as being experienced horsemen and women, your guides on this trail have a thorough knowledge of local history. All guides are multilingual French/English and the group size is between 5-10 riders.

Horses and Tack

The horses are pure or cross-bred Arabian or Thoroughbreds and warmbloods varying in height from 15.2hh to 17hh. The horses are exceptionally well-schooled and good-mannered at this destination and many of them have been bred and trained by your hosts themselves. The tack used is specialist trail riding saddles and you will be provided with saddlebags, a rain poncho,

and a water bottle. Horses are ridden in Myler bits which help to facilitate effective communication between horse and rider and a relaxed and happy horse.

Accommodation & Dining

Accommodation is in twin or double rooms at small, charming hotels or B&Bs, in the villages or nestled into the rural surroundings. Single rooms are available for a supplement. Your luggage will be transferred between stops. Most of the rooms will have an en-suite bathroom although this cannot be guaranteed. The luggage is transported in the support vehicle and transferred to each accommodation so you only need to carry daily essentials in your saddle bags during the day.

1st and 2nd nights: Le Panoramic in Sancerre

3rd night: Hôtel le Cerf in Briare

4th and 5th nights: Hôtel la Chaumière in Aubigny sur Nère

6th and 7th nights: Chambre d'Hôtes le Cep en Sancerrois in Sancerre.



Breakfasts are served at your hotel every morning, typically consisting of a hot drink (tea, coffee, hot chocolate), juice, breakfast pastries (croissant, pain au chocolat, pain aux raisins), bread, butter and jam, and sometimes yogurt. Lunches are traditional french pique-niques, expect fresh baguettes, sumptuous cheeses, salads and tasty charcuterie, along with a bottle of something local. Dinner will be typical French fare comprising several courses of regional specialities. Please note that wine is not included with dinners.

Itinerary

Day 1

Meet with your hosts and fellow riders at the Tracy Sancerre train station at 6 pm, head to your hotel in Sancerre for dinner and overnight.

Day 2 (morning ride only)

After breakfast you will meet the horses and set off along the paths of the Sancerre vineyards to Chavignol, where you will enjoy a picnic. The village of Chavignol is actually a hamlet of Sancerre. Located in the middle of the vineyards, this winegrowers' village is organised along a road that climbs towards the church and then up to the Graveron lookout, from where the view over Sancerre is magnificent. This hamlet is where the "crottin de Chavignol" (goat's cheese) was born. At the end of the 19th century, when the phylloxera epidemic devastated the vines, a large proportion of the land was recycled for goat rearing in the Sancerre region.

The afternoon is free for you to discover Sancerre. Sancerre is a charming old medieval town where you can enjoy strolling through the picturesque streets with their folkloric names: rue des Pressoirs, place du Puits-du-Marché and rue des Trois-Piliers. Through the cobbled streets, the Tour des Fiefs, the town's only defensive tower and the last vestige of the Château of the Counts of Sancerre, offers a panoramic view of Sancerre and the region from the top, at 40 metres high (195 steps). Dinner and overnight stay in Sancerre.



Day 3

We continue our discovery of the Sancerrois landscape with the Pays Fort. On our way to the village of Assigny, we leave behind the rows of vines to discover a landscape of fields of varied crops. We'll have a picnic in Assigny, where we find the highest point in the Cher region at Fait des Marnes, a promontory of the Pays-Fort (365 m) offering a semi-circular panoramic view (orientation table) over the Loire Valley, Puisaye, Nièvre and the Piton de Sancerre. After a refreshing nap, we set off for Vailly sur Sauldre and the Pays Fort. Backed by the vine-covered hills of the Sancerrois region, the Pays Fort stretches out over fertile bocages (from which it takes its name) covered with oilseed fields, hedged meadows where cows and goats graze, winding streams, sunken lanes and country roads... The Pays Fort boasts a rich rural heritage: old timber-framed dwellings (Manoeuvrerie du Noyer, 16th century), old mills (Moulin au Riche de Concessault, 16th century), wash-houses and the famous pyramid-shaped barns (17th and 18th centuries), typical curiosities not to be missed in the area. Overnight stay and dinner at Vailly sur Sauldre.

Day 4

For this 3rd day on horseback, we're still in the Pays Fort. For lunch, we're headed for Blancafort and its castle. We'll have a picnic on the banks of the old Sauldre canal, a canal with no connection to any waterway. In the afternoon, we'll visit the Blancafort castle. Built in the 15th century by the Boucard family on the site of an ancient seigneurie dating back to the 11th century, it was transformed in the 17th century. This fortified house with its fine brickwork stands on the banks of the Sauldre canal, in a pleasant setting enhanced by a formal garden. After this visit, we head for Aubigny sur Nère, this time in the Berry region. There was a time when alliances offered original concessions. This was the case during the famous Hundred Years' War, when Charles VII, King of France, gave the seigneurie of Aubigny to John Stuart de Darnley, Constable of the Scottish army, in the name of the Auld Alliance. For almost 4 centuries, the village lived on Scottish time, with kilts, bagpipes and whiskies lining the streets and Shakespeare's language holding no secrets for anyone. Returned to French territory in the early 19th century, the Scottish heritage is still very much alive today. Overnight stay and dinner in Aubigny sur Nère.

Day 5 (morning ride only)

After breakfast we're off to Château de la Verrerie in Oizon for a picnic. Château de La Verrerie is a Renaissance gem built by Béraud Stuart. The site is full of paths where Alain Fournier, the author of *Le Grand Meaulnes*, loved to wander. It has been owned by the Stuarts for two centuries, before being given by Louis XIV to Louise de Kéroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth. The afternoon is free to visit Aubigny sur Nère. Scotland is around every corner. From the Stuarts' castle, now the town hall, to the unique collection of half-timbered houses, to the Aubigny Auld Alliance whisky brand proudly displaying the local colours, the only thing missing is the rain to make you think you're really in Scotland! The splendour of this town, located on the Jacques Coeur Historic Route, is complemented by some lovely heritage features such as the Philippe Auguste enclosure, the Gothic church of Saint-Martin and the Augustins cloister. The superb large gardens, inspired by Le Nôtre, were bequeathed by the Duchess of Portsmouth. Overnight stay and dinner in Aubigny sur Nère.



Day 6

After breakfast, we join the horses. We're headed for La Chapelotte for a picnic, in the heart of the Pays-Fort between the vineyards of Menetou-Salon and Sancerre, close to the pottery village of La Borne. The rolling landscape, with the Vernon river running through it, is a favourite with hunters, anglers and walkers. After a good lunch break, we continue our way through this undulating landscape to Sens-Beaujeu, where we leave the horses. Sens-Beaujeu lies between the Pays Fort and the Sancerrois, just a stone's throw from the Champagne plain. The Grande Sauldre river and its tributary, the Étang de Couët stream, cut through much of the area's plateau, forming wet valleys in a landscape of hedged farmland. Overnight stay and dinner in Sancerre.

Day 7

Today, we're off to the Tour de Vesvre in the commune of Neuvy Deux Clochers. This fortified house with its massive, thick walls stands on the Vesvre site. Designated a "Domus fortis", it is one of those rare fortified structures that appeared late in the 13th century. We'll take time out to enjoy a picnic in this beautiful setting. It was built at the end of the 12th century, on the remains of an ancient seigneurial residence dating back to the 9th century. Its history is inseparable from that of the Site de Vesvre, which included the neighbouring motte castrale in the 9th and 10th centuries. The Tower was listed as a historic monument in 1993. The adjoining 13th-century farmhouse was a fortified farm with a stable, dovecote and barn. The barn and dovecote have recently been restored. We finish this last day at the Bête Noire farm, where we began these 6 days. Overnight stay and dinner in Sancerre.

Day 8

After breakfast your hosts will drop you off at the Tracy Sancerre train station for your journey home.



International flights & Airport transfers

Do not book flights until you have received the Booking confirmation email from saddletravel.com.

Please arrange to arrive at the Tracy Sancerre train station by 6 PM on Day 1 for transfer. Train station transfers are payable on arrival in cash. Tracy Sancerre train station is a 2-hours trip from Paris Bercy train station.

What to bring

- Riding hat
- Jodhpurs or other comfortable trousers
- Riding boots (we recommend short riding or hiking boots)
- Half chaps if wearing short boots
- T-shirts and long-sleeved shirts
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses
- Warm layers - At times the evening temperature can drop significantly
- Casual clothes & shoes for evening
- Light raincoat
- Insect repellent
- Sun cream
- Camera
- A copy of your passport
- French phrase book or app

Climate

The Sancerre region in France, located in the eastern part of the Loire Valley, enjoys a continental climate with some oceanic influences. Summers are generally warm and dry, providing ideal conditions for viticulture, while winters are cold, with occasional frost. Spring and autumn bring moderate temperatures and rainfall, contributing to the region's lush greenery and fertile vineyards. The combination of these climatic conditions, along with the region's unique terroir, is particularly favorable for growing Sauvignon Blanc grapes, which are renowned for producing the crisp, aromatic wines that Sancerre is famous for!

Health

For health and vaccine recommendations, please consult your healthcare provider at least 8 weeks before your trip.

Country specific information can also be found at the National Travel Health Network and Centre website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries>.

Travel documents

For entry requirements to France for UK citizens, please visit the Foreign Travel Advice website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/france/entry-requirements>

For any other nationalities, please contact your local embassy to check entry requirements.

Having the correct travel documents is entirely your responsibility.

Currency & Tipping

The local currency in France is the Euro. We recommend bringing enough local currency for any additional drinks you may want to purchase such as wine with dinner.

Tipping is common when eating and drinking in France. Tipping your guide is at your discretion, gratuities are greatly appreciated.

Riding declaration

“I am an experienced rider and able to mount & dismount unaided. I have a firm seat and I’m confident and in control at all paces (including rising trot, light seat canter and gallops) and have a good level of current riding fitness. I do not suffer from any illness or disability that could prejudice my safety or that of others.”

Cancellation policy

Payment & Cancellation Terms

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Holidays are confirmed with a 20% non-refundable deposit. The full balance is due 56 days before the start date.

If you cancel your booking less than 56 days before the start date of your trail we are entitled to receive full payment, less refunds as follows:

42 days or more before booking date - 50%

30 days or more - 30%

less than 30 days - nil

Insurance

All saddletravel.com customers are required to take out appropriate travel insurance that covers horse riding and holiday cancellation. Proof of insurance details will be required during the booking process.

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