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Dordogne & Loire 2026 - Part 2

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Part 2: The Loire

We'd spent a great week in the Dordogne, hosted by Sarah and Tim at their gites. The weather had been warm and sunny and the roads fun to ride, but now it was time to say goodbye and start the next part of our trip. When we left the weather was overcast and the temperature only 13°. It felt decidedly chilly after the warmth of the last week, but we hoped it would soon warm up.

Once more we found ourselves on the long, straight roads of central France. At one point the GPS indicated "straight on in 30 miles"!

In the late morning we stopped for a break at a Tabac in Bellac – hot chocolate for most of us and a sandwich from the nearby supermarket for some. Waterproofs were donned before we set off again because it was still chilly. Then more straight roads, refreshments at a Patapain (always good places to stop), before the weather started to warm up and the roads improved. We passed the Château at Montresor, the



Château at Givenchy and into the extensive Parc de Chambord, passing the impressive Château de Chambord before crossing the Loire at Blois and following the river to our hotel in Beaugency. Duncan had left us earlier,



heading for an overnight stay in Tours. After a meal in an Italian restaurant nearby we retired to the bar in the hotel, where alcohol measures were very generous!

On Thursday we decided to visit the Parc Mini Châteaux near Amboise. We took a roundabout route there, but the roads were very busy and not good riding. The Parc was amusing, the models fairly well-made and the visit well organised. We can now say that we have seen all 41 of the Châteaux of the Loire! The café there was

closed, but we found another Patapain nearby before riding back along the Loire to Beaugency.



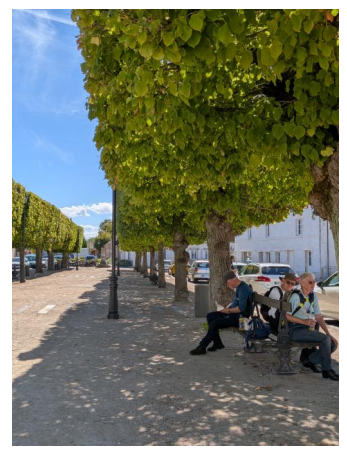


On Friday Paul and Erica were leaving on the start of their journey home, so Mike and I left with Peter and Nicole, heading for the mediaeval village of Loches. We had trouble finding the way out of Beaugency (SatNav issues) and 45 mins later we were back where we started! When we finally got underway the roads were a bit boring but picked up after about an hour. The road past Château Montpoupon and on to Loches was particularly good. The Cité Royale in Loches is perched at the top of a narrow mediaeval street full of restaurants and cafes. Obviously, we had to stop! After lunch we climbed on up to the citadel and explored the ramparts, taking in the views over the city before the return journey to our hotel.



While we had breakfast on Saturday, we noticed a market in the square, so we spent an hour wandering through the stalls before setting off on a winding route to St Benoit. Riding was good today – winding but fast roads through mainly wooded countryside. St Benoit is a small village with a large Abbey. We looked round the Abbey, bought a picnic in a nearby patisserie and ate in the shade of the trees by the car park. Then home on interesting roads across open fields.

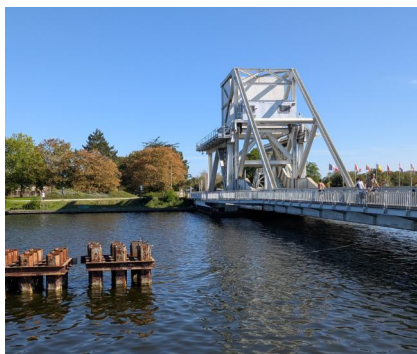




Sunday would be our last day in this area so we decided to visit a Château – it had to be done. After considering all nearby castles we decided to head for Cheverney – it would be a decent ride and hopefully not as busy as the ones in Amboise and Blois or Chambord. We spent a pleasant day at the Château. The paths through the grounds were a bit dusty after the dry summer, and it was a bit too hot at 28°, but the Château itself was full of extravagant furniture and treasures from the 17th century. The café in the Orangery was nice too!



On Monday morning we left Beaugency and started the ride to the overnight ferry from Caen. More straight but fast roads to a coffee stop a couple of hours later, followed by much more interesting roads. We were heading for Pegasus Bridge, but in the last 50 miles we encountered four different road closures, each with long diversions badly marked! We still had time to kill before our ferry, so we rode on to the viewpoint overlooking Arromanche and the Mulberry Harbours – always a good place to while away some time. Then back to Ouistreham for a meal before checking in and boarding the ferry.



When the ferry docked in Portsmouth the next morning we were greeted by a spectacular sunrise – a fitting end to a great couple of weeks in France.

