

BIKE TRAIL

56

FROM VEZELAY TO LIMOGES

Go bike on the new Saint Jacques Road!

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Agence française
des chemins
de Compostelle

From the eternal hills of Vézelay
to the Limousin Foothills:
bike on the *Via Lemovicensis*

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Saint Jacques by bike

A journey through time and France

Make way for cyclists on the paths!

Fast, environment-friendly, sporty and conducive both to daydreaming and meeting people, the exhilaration of cycling travels wins over an ever-increasing number of travellers on their way to Santiago de Compostela, especially young people. **Now more than 20,000 cyclists reach the Galician capital every year!**

Cycle tourists flock from all over Europe, converging on the Basque Country, before switching to the Iberian routes. These modern pilgrims follow three French routes: Eurovélo 3 – Scandibérique and the two cycle routes V41 – Voie de Tours et **V56 – Voie de Vézelay.**

An immersion in authentic France

Connected to the routes of Northern Europe, the V56 - Voie de Vézelay is an invitation to expand time, plunging into romantic settings and adjusting to the rhythm of the countryside.

Travelling in a green and bucolic setting, this itinerary sounds like a promise of a change of scenery and escape in the picturesque territories of Nivernais, Berry, the Creuse Valley, Limousin...

The wine-growing hills, the medieval castles dominating the bocages, the tributaries of the Royal Loire come to life under the curious gaze of the cyclist

An easy interconnected and equipped route

Away from the urban bustle, the V56 remains nonetheless at the gates of the large basins of population. **About 2 hours from the capital,** the itinerary will thrill the public in search of adventures and cultural surprises in a preserved environment.

The freedom of movement is endless: **crossing the Loire à Vélo and Eurovélo 6, Via Allier, the Tour de Creuse...** Whether planning the itinerary using France Vélo Tourisme or improvising, in any case, you can count on the many **Bike Host sports Vélo,** a national brand guaranteeing quality welcome services along the bike paths.

Public transportation access



ROUTE ENTRANCE STATIONS

SERMIZELLES - VEZELAY (YONNE),
 AVALLON (YONNE), AUXERRE (YONNE),
 FLEZ-CLUZY-TANNAY (NIEVRE),
 LA CHARITÉ SUR LOIRE (NIEVRE),
 NEVERS (NIÈVRE)

*Sermizelles-Vézelay station is
 Accessed directly by the TER line
 «Paris-Bercy - Avallon/Corbigny»
 in 2 hours. Otherwise, the journey
 can becut by first joining Avallon station
 or Auxerre station*



EXIT STATIONS

LIMOGES BENELECTINS

*Limoges Benedictins,
 unquestionably one of
 most beautiful stations in Europe,
 is connected
 to the entire western half
 of France: Poitiers (2hrs);
 Toulouse (3.5 hrs); Vierzon (2 hrs)
 and Paris Austerlitz (2.20 hrs).*



Logbook FREE

The *V56 map guide* published by the Agence française des chemins de Compostelle is available free of charge in all tourist offices along the trail and in digital version. At a 1:100,000 scale, you now have all the cards in hand to get started!

A few figures

- 420 kilometres
- 3 regions
- 6 districts crossed
- 6 districts crossed
 2022 official launch
 Of the trail
- 100% of the trail
 is marked
- 7 national or European
 connected **connected**
 biking routes
- 2025 opening
 of the **Berry canal**



The MUST DO OF THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The serial cultural property “Trails to Santiago de Compostela in France”, added in 1998 to the UNESCO World Heritage List, includes 78 items (64 monuments, 7 groups of monuments and 7 trail sections). The V56 crosses no less than 10 of these landmarks of the Saint James pilgrimage, 5 of which are located on the Vézelay - Limoges section.

St. James Church > ASQUINS

Less than 2 kilometres north of Vézelay, the Saint-Jacques church overlooks the Moutier hill. Its chaplain around 1135-1140 was a fundamental character of the Compostelan narrative: Aimery Picaud, aka Olivier d'Asquins, the presumed editor of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi* or *Codex Calixtinus*.

Basilica Sainte-Marie-Madeleine > VEZELAY

Starting point of one of the 4 routes of the *Codex Calixtinus*, the Basilica of Saint Mary Magdalene and its “eternal hill” enjoy a double listing on the UNESCO World Heritage List. An architectural jewel of Burgundian Romanesque art, the basilica reveals all its splendour with the course of the sun.

Priory church Sainte-Croix-Notre-Dame > CHARITE-SUR-LOIRE

Built from 1070, this Benedictine church is a remarkable example of Burgundian Romanesque art. “Eldest daughter of Cluny”, her relationship with the abbey of Cluny III can be appreciated in the plan of the two buildings, similar, like their method of construction: same order of the elevation of the choir, roundabout with eight columns.

St. Stephen’s Basilica > NEUVY-SAINT-SEPULCHRE

Founded by Lord Eudes of Déols, returning from a trip to the Holy Land, the monument imitates the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. A treasure of Romanesque art, the spectacular 22 meters diameter and 16 meters high rotunda, is made up of three levels with an ambulatory. It is supported by 11 columns, representing the eleven apostles – after the betrayal of Judas.

St. Leonard’s Church > SAINT-LEONARD-DE-NOBLAT

The scale of the building, whose nave alone measures nearly 33 meters by 11, testifies to the ambition of the construction site started in the 1030s by the chapter of Noblat and the bishop of Limoges. The 1,200 places dedicated to Saint-Leonard throughout Europe testify to the intensity of the cult dedicated to this contemporary of Clovis.



Organisation
 des Nations Unies
 pour l'éducation,
 la science et la culture



Chemins de Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle en France
 inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en 1998



Micro-adventures

to be adjusted or combined according to your desires!

TRAIL 1

Roll down the hills of Burgundy to the Loire Chateaux

**FROM VEZELAY, 89
TO LA CHARITE SUR LOIRE, 58**

 Duration: 2 days •  Distance: 92 kms
>> Leaving from: Saint Mary Magdalene Basilica
Access train station at 10 kms in Semizelles
Vezelay, accessible from Paris, Auxerre, Avallon...
<< Arriving at: La Charite sur Loire Priory
Train station accessible from Paris, Auxerre, Nevers

How better to discover the Compostela trails than by this two-day adventure starting from the hill of Vézelay, the symbolic start of the Via Lemovicensis? Through vineyards and domain forests, this route will reward sporting efforts with tastings of local wines and gastronomy.

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On the «eternal hill» of Vézelay, travellers dominate the whole Morvan with a panoramic view. It may be necessary to fight the desire to contemplate the place and enjoy the charms of the village. The mystical Romanesque basilica of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine houses a remarkable sculpted decoration.

Art galleries, cellars, museums... it is now difficult to convince yourself to leave this place full of curiosities. A false start to reach the church of Asquins, 2 km further north, is a good excuse.

The route runs between vineyards on the edge of villages and on the hillsides, domain forests and gentle hills adorned with the golden colours of sunflower and cereal crops. The medieval villages of Tannay, Varzy, Murlin cut through the landscape and invite cyclists to take the time to visit wine cellars, the vernacular heritage, the many places that have welcomed pilgrims...

Crossing the Yonne and Nièvre rivers and their many tributaries and canals is a reminder that Burgundy has one of the most beautiful and varied navigable networks in Europe.

After leaving the Bertranges forest, the second largest oak grove in France, the journey ends on the banks of the Loire, at La Charité-sur-Loire. With its ramparts, its stone bridge and its majestic priory founded in 1059 by the powerful monastery of Cluny, this ultimate stopover will thrill lovers of medieval architecture and Romanesque legends.



TRAIL 2

In the era of the fortified castles of Berry

To follow the Pilgrims' cycle trail in Berry is to dive into the historic past of central France during the Wars of Lordships, Hundred Years and Religion. Abbey, castles, the remains of the Middle-Age are revealed as you bike!

From the top of the limestone mound dispersing the Cher and the Marmande, the castle offers a scenic view of Berry. The only bastioned fortification built in centre of France, it fell into the hands of the English during the Hundred Years War in 1361 and was the scene of numerous clashes. It was in the 17th century, Henri II de Bourbon transformed it into an impregnable place.

A few pedal strokes will bring travellers to the Abbaye de Noirlac, a jewel of Cistercian architecture. Also a victim of the war with the British, the monks had to fortify the abbey, building a keep that no longer exists. The trails continues through Berry Champagne, revealing its Charolais cows, its bocages and its secret abbeys. The castles of La Motte Feuilly and Sarzay cut the horizon with their high towers and keeps. Decors of the novels of George Sand, they seduce by their architecture and their legends.

The basilica of Neuvy-Saint-Sepulchre, built on the model of its namesake in the Holy Land of Jerusalem and restored by Viollet-le-Duc, is intimately linked to the Crusades, from its foundation to the invention of its relics. Finally, what fortress inspires the traveller's imagination more than the remains of Crozant? Located on a rocky outcrop at the confluence of the Sédelle and the Creuse, it is considered one of the most powerful strongholds in France in the Middle Ages. It's easy to get carried away in the middle of a medieval battle among these evocative ruins.

The adventure ends under the Saint-Jean gate with a pointed arch, symbol of La Souterraine, border between the kingdoms of Berry and Limousin, where the footsteps of pilgrims who found rest in the shelter of its fortifications still resonate.



**FROM SAINT AMAND MONTROND, 18,
TO LA SOUTERRAINE, 23**

 Duration: 3 to 4 days •  Distance: 150 kms

>> Leaving from: Saint Amand Montrond Fortress
Train station accessible from Bourges, Montluçon and Vierzon

<< Arriving at: Saint Jean Gate in La Souterraine
Charité sur Loire Priory
Train station accessible from Paris Austerlitz, Limoges Benedictins, Toulouse Matabiou



FROM LA SOUTERRAINE, 23 TO LIMOGES, 86

🕒 Duration: 2 to 3 days • 🚲 Distance: 100 kms

>> Leaving from: Saint-Jean de la Souterraine

Train station accessible from Paris Austerlitz,
Limoges Benedictins, Toulouse Matabiou

<< Arriving at: Benedictins train station in Limoges

Accessible from Paris Austerlitz, Poitiers,
Bordeaux and Toulouse Matabiou

🚲 TRAIL 3

Limousin getaway in lands of character and know-how

Both verdant and preserved, the section of the V56 in the Limousin will be, with its many forests, its rural meadows, its rivers and its bodies of water, appreciated by nature lovers. Land of rest and rejuvenation, this peaceful route is also rich with a remarkable architectural and artistic heritage, crowned at its end by the authenticity and the traditions of Limoges.

Starting from the gates of the Limousin foothills of the Massif Central, this adventure will delight travellers looking for a more sporting challenge and a reconnection with nature. The Gartempe valley joins La Souterraine in Bénévent l'Abbaye, "Petite Cité de Caractère®", renowned for its chestnut shingle factory. An immersive experience to go back to the 1900s is offered at the ScenoVision. The slope becomes steeper as one approaches the Thaurion gorges, up to 6%, arriving at Chatelus-le-Marcheix, an ideal place to stop and enjoy the charms of the water bodies of the Étroit and the Roche Thalamie dams. The most observant will be able to see traces of a rich fauna: peregrine falcon, otter, rock swallow, wild cat. Extricating yourself from the gorges to reach Saint Leonard-de-Noblat and its collegiate, listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of the Camino de Santiago requires a final effort before reaching less steep hills up to Limoges along the Vienne. The entrance to the city is via the medieval Saint Etienne bridge with cobblestones polished by the passage of pilgrims. Recognized as a creative city in Europe, Limoges is renowned for its porcelain, but also ceramics, paper, leather and embroidery.

TESTIMONIES

from the bikes!

"Although this V56 is still brand new, we rely on this cycle route to start a job of qualifying the accommodation offer, by deploying the Haut-Vienne district charter "Hiking Home" and the national "Accueil Vélo" label. So for us today is about grasping an existing proposal, marked and enhanced to develop an essential accommodation offer up to standard"

**Tourists office of Noblat
SPL Terres de Limousin**

"I liked this ride along the V56. This trail, off the beaten track, allows to discover in peace a heritage and territories that are often overlooked."

Brunaud Devillard
Cycle tourist

"I opened last year a bike hosting spot in my accommodation located at La Charite-sur-Loire. Cyclists are happy to stop there, to rest and fix their bike if needed. I heard very positive feedback on the Vézelay Limoges route from visitors: by bike, it's ideal."

La Cour du Château
Bike Spot Host

"For the city of La Charité-sur-Loire, with its priory church listed by UNESCO for the paths of Compostelle, the creation of the cycle route of Saint-Jacques V56 takes on a strategic importance for its tourism development. This cycle path and its meshing allows to promote green tourism in west of Burgundy and lends an international dimension to the discovery of our local heritage."

Henri Valès
Mayor of Charite-sur-Loire



THE TOP 10 POINTS OF INTEREST TO SEE WHILE ON THE TRAIL

1

The Visitor's House in Vézelay

Discover this stopover on the way to the Basilica. You will admire the art and the secrets of the builders who erected it more than 900 years ago, observing the great characters in the history of Vézelay.

2

The Salt Fountains in Saint Père

A few kilometres from Vézelay, visit an outdoor site and the reception centre for archaeological discoveries presenting the results of excavations and the salient features of the human societies that worked from the Neolithic period to Antiquity, retracing 4,300 years of the site's history.

3

The natural site of the Tannay vineyard

Today, still very confidential, the Coteaux de Tannay vineyard covers approximately 25 hectares, operated by 7 winegrowers. The wines are offered for direct sale to the estates and are the pride of the region.

4

Auguste Grasset Museum in Varzy

The Auguste Grasset Museum presents objects illustrating the passion for the collection of the bourgeois of Nivernais. In his life he collected more than 3,500 objects.

5

The Port Conscience district of Marseilles-Les-Aubigny

Located near the Cité Heymann district and the hamlet Le Poids de Fer, at the confluence of the Aubeois and the Loire, this small hamlet is home to the largest port between Briare and Digoin. Guided tours are offered there to learn more about the important barge past of the Loire.

6

Gargillesse-Dampierre

Classified among the Most Beautiful Villages of France, Gargillesse has welcomed many impressionist painters seduced by the vision of its houses with sloping roofs, harmoniously grouped around the castle. To be visited: the Romanesque church, the castle, the art galleries, the house of George Sand.

7

Sarzay Castle

Built in the 14th century, this incredible medieval fortress has four restored floors, including the guard room on the fourth floor. The top of the towers, where a superb wooden framework is located, allows you to discover the beauty of the landscape. The building served as a setting for George Sand for one of her novels.

8

The Tower of Bridiers in La Souterraine

To immerse yourself in the time of the Middle Ages, gain height by climbing the spiral staircase of the Tour de Bridiers, which leads to the rooms of the keep to access the terrace.

9

The Scénovision in Bénévent l'Abbaye

In the first limousine "Small City of Character", Bénévent l'Abbaye, you will find Le Scénovision, a place where you can discover the history of Creuse through the daily life of Creuse masons, fellow builders and pilgrims on the way to Santiago de Compostela to explore the history of Creuse.

10

The Got Mill

In Saint Léonard de Noblat, the Got mill bears witness to the papermaking activity of Limousin in the 18th century. Today, converted into a museum, it is a real place for production demonstration to discover the techniques of stationery and graphic arts.



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