THE ABBEY OF FONTEVRAUD AND THE CHÂTEAU OF USSÉ

The Abbey of Fontevraud and the Château of Ussé

Duration: 10h · Type: Classic

Departure by coach towards the Royal Abbey of Fontevraud. Founded in 1101 by the itinerant preacher Robert of Arbrissel, this abbey is unique in its kind: from its very beginnings, it welcomed a mixed community of monks and nuns, placed under the authority of an abbess. Inspired by the Rule of Saint Benedict, life at Fontevraud was governed by prayer, poverty, and penance. Thanks to the support of Fulk V, Count of Anjou and future King of Jerusalem, the abbey rapidly expanded and became the center of an influential monastic order, the Fontevrist Order, which spread as far as England and Spain. Fontevraud is also famous for being the necropolis of the Plantagenets: it houses the tombs of Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and their son Richard the Lionheart, emblematic figures of 12th-century Anglo-French history. Over the centuries, the abbey experienced periods of prosperity and decline. During the Hundred Years' War, it nearly disappeared, but was revived in the 15th century under the guidance of five abbesses from the Bourbon dynasty. In the 17th century, Gabrielle de Rochechouart, sister of Madame de Montespan and abbess of Fontevraud, strengthened ties with the royal court: Louis XV even entrusted the education of his younger daughters to the Fontevrist nuns. After the French Revolution, the abbey was closed in 1792 and converted into a prison until 1963. Today, it is a major cultural landmark, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The visit will end with a tour of a wine estate and a tasting of Saumur wines. Lunch in a restaurant.
In the afternoon, continuation to Rigny-Ussé for a visit of the Château d'Ussé. Built between the 15th and 16th centuries, this castle embodies the fairy-tale architecture of the Renaissance with its fortified towers, elegant turrets, and refined spires. It is said to have inspired Charles Perrault in creating the setting for Sleeping Beauty, and today features a staging of the tale inside its towers. Still inhabited, the château offers a true immersion in history and legend, with furnished rooms, mannequins in period costume, and formal French gardens.
Return on board at the end of the afternoon.

PLEASE NOTE

- The order of the visits can change.
- Times are approximate.