

Renter's Planning Guide

Chateau du Pin is located outside the village of Champocé sur Loire, 18 km (30-minute drive) west of the city of Angers in the province of Anjou.

Angers is approximately 200 miles southwest of Paris (4+ hours by car and 95 minutes by TGV train) or about 60 km (hour drive) east of Nantes. Modern shopping centers, banks, hospitals, car rental agencies, and train station are in Angers. The nearest international commercial airports are located in Nantes, Tours and Paris.



How to get to Le Pin

By Car

From Paris or Charles de Gaulle airport (322 kilometers; about 200 miles or 4+ hours by car):

N104 (or sometimes A104) is the beltway that goes around Paris. Follow it around to the south until it meets with A10. Look for signs that say Bordeaux/Nantes. Take the Autoroute A10 to the west. Take A11 when it divides and head toward Chartres, Le Mans, Angers, and Nantes. These are toll roads and US credit cards will not work. You will need cash.

About 18 km (15 miles) beyond Angers, take the exit (Sortie 19) marked "Chalonne". After the exit, pay the 1.80 €¹ toll at St. Germain des Pres. Drive to the opposite side of the roundabout, onto a small paved road (between the large industrial buildings) marked by directional signs for "Jardins du Chateau du Pin". Follow the signs to the chateau. As you enter the farm of Le Pin, follow signs for the 'lodgers' parking (a somewhat serpentine path between the barns) to the parking area set aside for our chateau guests.

If you wish to go the Angers from A11 (to visit the cathedral or castle, do some shopping, go to the train station etc,) exit at Sortie 18 and follow signs for "Centre Ville".

¹ Toll fees are subject to change. Amounts mentioned were correct in the spring of 2014

From Nantes (60 kilometers, about 40 miles):

Take A-11 towards Angers/Paris. There will be a 7.80 € toll in Ancenis. Take the exit (Sortie 19 marked "Chalonne"). After the exit, drive to the opposite side of the roundabout onto a small paved road (between the large industrial buildings) marked by directional signs for "Jardins du Chateau du Pin". Follow the signs to the chateau. As you enter the farm of Le Pin, follow signs for the 'lodgers' parking (a somewhat serpentine path between the barns) to the parking area set aside for our chateau guests.

An alternative route between Angers and Nantes is D723 (The old N23). It is the main non-toll road that runs between Angers and Nantes, paralleling the Loire. As you approach Champtocé sur Loire you will start to see signs for "Jardins du Chateau du Pin" on the east side of the village, next to the ruins of "Barbe Bleu". Le Pin is approximately 3 km from Champtocé.

By Train

Train service on the French railway (SNCF) is available to Angers from throughout France. The TGV fast train takes about 90 minutes from the Montparnasse station in Paris to Angers and 2 ½ hours from Charles de Gaulle airport (CDG) Terminal 2F. There are hourly trains from Montparnasse and roughly four trains from CDG per day. TGV service requires reservations that can be procured at the station or on-line at www.tgv.com along with up-to-date timetables. The website has timetables and reservations from other cities as well. Note: the code for Angers is "Angers St Laud (49)".

There is local train service (*Ter* service) to Champtocé that runs between Angers and Nantes. There are usually four trains a day in both directions. For an on-line schedule visit:

http://www.ter-sncf.com/pays_de_la_loire/V2/carte_horaires/index.asp.

Choose "04 Angers - Nantes" in the drop-down menu to see the timetable.

There is a telephone at the Champtocé train station, but no taxi service.

Car Rentals

All the major rental car companies have offices and cars available at the train station (gare) in Angers. Note that with the exception of Paris and CDG airport, rental car offices are closed on Sundays in France. Taxis are always available at the gare in Angers. Fares from the gare to Le Pin are about 60€.

Mapping Systems

If you are using GPS based navigation system, the coordinates of Le Pin are: 47° 25' 40" N; 000° 50' 58" W.

What to expect at Le Pin when you arrive

When you arrive, you can expect to find the following:

- Renter's Manual with useful information on the chateau and surrounding area,
- Beds made and fresh towels laid out,
- A hairdryer in each bathroom,
- Small washer for personal laundry in the nook halfway up the main staircase,
- WiFi Internet access throughout much of the building (SSID is: Le Pin, Password is: lepin49123),
- Games and toys for children and the young-at-heart in the Main Hall under the bench,
- If you have made arrangements beforehand with the [Reservation Managers](#), a 'Welcome Basket' of fresh provisions will be awaiting you in the kitchen.

What to do after you arrive

Guests at the chateau enjoy many activities in the immediate area and throughout the region. Here are a few ideas that we have enjoyed over the years:

- Visit the castle in Angers and view the famous tapestries
- Tour the grand chateaux of the Loire
- Explore the many local markets
- Go on a wine tasting tour
- Walk or bike through the magnificent Loire countryside
- Take a side trip to Normandy and Brittany
- Spend a day at the seashore
- Dine at fine area restaurants
- Or relax and enjoy a glass of wine in the gardens

Information on all of these activities and more is available on our website: www.sci-le-pin.com, in the chateau, and at the following websites:

- [Official Anjou tourism website](#) (in English),
- [Comité des Parcs et Jardins de France website](#), (in French & English)

Helpful Hints about Living in France for a week or two

For those of you with limited experience living in France outside of Paris, this next section might be helpful.

Credit Cards

Most stores and restaurants will accept US credit cards (Visa, MasterCard), but be aware that European credit cards (BC) are different from US cards in that they have a computer chip imbedded in them that the card readers 'read'. These BC cards are used exclusively in automated equipment like the AutoRoute tollbooths, 24/7 automated gas stations, SNCF automated ticket machines. If there is a cashier available, they usually can process a US style credit or debit card.

ATMs process US style credit cards and are at most bank branches and super markets.

Driving

Driving is a little different from in the US. Unless otherwise posted, the speed limit is 90 km/hr on the local roads and 130 km/hr on the Autoroutes. The speed limit in towns and villages is 50 km/hr, unless otherwise posted. Many hamlets have 70 km/hr posted speed limits.

The police use portable and permanent radar machines that take a picture of any offending speeder and send the ticket to the vehicle's registered owner. The rental car company will send you the bill. The permanent radar machines have warning signs, but are still a major revenue producer for the government. It is best to adhere to the posted speed limit, even if traffic around you seems to be going faster.

There are many more roundabouts on the local roads than in most of the US. Those in the roundabout have the right-of-way over those entering. Don't exit the roundabout until you know which direction you are going. It is acceptable to go around several times. If navigating from a printed map, (rather than GPS) it's best to know the name of the next town or towns as route numbers change and aren't always reliable.

The local rural roads village streets tend to be very narrow by US standards, not much wider than a car width. Use care when traffic approaches. You often have to pull onto the grassy shoulder to pass oncoming traffic, especially if the vehicle is a large farm tractor!

Parking Tickets

If you get a parking ticket or similar fine, you can take care of it quickly by going to any Tabac and buying the correct stamp. The larger stamp goes on the main part of the ticket and the small one goes on your receipt. Just pop the main part into the mail at a La Poste with a postage stamp and you will be all set.

Shopping

Like the US, supermarkets can be either small 'family run' or large 'big box' versions. The smaller stores tend to be open from 7 AM to noon and again from 2 PM to 7 PM. The larger stores (Super U's, HyperMarche's, etc.) tend to be open from 9 AM to 7 PM continuously. Most (but not all) stores are closed on Sundays. Some smaller stores will be open Sunday morning but closed Monday morning.

There are wonderful fresh air markets in different towns throughout the week. Most purchases will be cash only.

Shopping carts and bags

French supermarkets rarely provide shopping bags (but will sell you one). They expect you to bring your own and to do your own bagging. Shopping carts are available but you have to 'rent' them for a one Euro coin. Insert the coin, do your shopping, and when you return the cart to the cart corral you will get your coin back.

Optional Services

The following services can be arranged when making your reservation:

- An excellent local caterer, Anne Villedey, is available to prepare your evening meals in the local style. Please contact the [Reservations Manager](#) beforehand if you would like this service.
- Hot Air Balloon rides can be arranged (weather permitting) through the [Reservation Manager](#). Launches are usually in the early morning or evening from the chateau grounds and last about an hour with a lift back to the chateau afterwards. If this is of interest to you, please contact the Reservation Manager as soon as possible since the balloon companies are often booked months in advance.

Other Useful Information**Emergency Numbers throughout France**

- Fire (Pompiers): Dial 18 from any landline,
Dial 112 from mobile phone
- Police(Gendarmerie): Dial 17 from any landline,
Dial 112 from mobile phone
- Ambulance (SAMU) Dial 15 from any landline,
Dial 112 from mobile phone
- Champtocé Pharmacy: 02 40 83 52 26
- Hospital d'Angers: 02 41 35 36 37

Other Numbers

- Resident Manager: 07 78 37 64 08
- Reservation Manager: (307) 413-5137 (USA, -8 hours)
- Marie de Brebisson: 06 19 77 22 40 (Bilingual)
- Garden Manager: 06 11 68 61 81 (French only)
- Château Phone: 02 41 39 97 41
- Château Fax: 02 41 39 88 41