

## **Loire Cycle Route update March 2021**

*Since the guide was published there have been a small number of minor changes to reflect road management schemes including new roundabouts, cycle lanes and changed signposting. In addition there have been some significant route changes. A new dedicated cycle track has replaced the busy road approach to Le Puy-en-Velay (stage 2). Between Montrond-les-Bains and Digoin (stages 5-7 use is made of the 'VéloLoire' cycle route (V71) which includes sections along the towpath of the canal de Roanne à Digoin and the trackbed of an old railway. A fully waymarked alternative route is used to visit Angers via the Trélazé slate quarries (stage 22) while between Paimbœuf and St Brevin-les-Pins (stage 26) the previous provisional road route has been replaced by a new cycle track alongside the Loire estuary.*

### **Introduction, getting to the start by rail**

*During the coronavirus pandemic Eurostar departures have been greatly reduced and the carriage of cycles is suspended. When normal service is resumed, Eurostar have announced that they intend to increase the fares for cycles but have not announced what the new fares will be. The paragraph below describes the situation prior to the pandemic, which is an update to the requirements given in the guide.*

*p24* Travelling from the UK, you can take your cycle on Eurostar from London St Pancras (not Ebbsfleet nor Ashford) to Paris (Gare du Nord). Trains run hourly throughout the day, taking less than two and a half hours to reach Paris via the Channel tunnel. Up to six cycles are carried per train, two fully-assembled plus four dismantled bikes packed in specially designed fibre-glass bike boxes provided by Eurostar. Bookings, which open six months in advance, must be made through EuroDespatch (+44 (0)344 822 5822). Prices vary from £30–£55 depending on how far ahead you book and whether your cycle is fully assembled or dismantled. Cycles must be checked in at the EuroDespatch centre beside the bus drop-off point at the back of St Pancras station, at least 60mins before departure. If you need to dismantle your bike, EuroDespatch will provide tools and packing advice. Leave yourself plenty of time for dismantling and packing. In Paris Gare du Nord, cycles are collected from Geoparts baggage office which is reached by a path L of platform 3. More information at [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com) Unfortunately the daily direct Eurostar service to Lyon, Valence and Marseille does not carry cycles.

*p24* There are currently no cycle-carrying TGV trains operating between Paris Gare de Lyon and Valence Ville. It is now necessary to take a Regional Express train from Paris Gare de Bercy to Lyon Perrache and change there to another Regional Express train to Valence Ville. This extends Paris–Valence journey time from 3hr to 7hr. Paris Bercy is a 5min ride from Paris Lyon. *During the pandemic the Regional Express service from Paris to Lyon has been reduced from hourly departures to two trains per day.*

### **Prologue route from Langogne**

*p42* The Montana bar and restaurant has closed.

*p42* A new entrance has been opened from D116 allowing direct access to the car park of the Source Géographique de la Loire. This can be reached by turning L 200m before reaching the T-junction with D378.

## Stage 1.

p45 From Source Géographique de la Loire follow car park exit road SE downhill and turn R onto D116.

## Stage 2

*The voie verte along the old railway line has been waymarked vèloroute V73 and extended to reach the centre of Le Puy-en-Velay.*

p54 After Taulhac tunnel, stay on voie verte along old railway (*do not turn R over grassy bank*) then bear L to by-pass site of former **Coubon-Valhac** station (25.5km, 720m) and emerge beside roundabout. Follow cycle track anti-clockwise around roundabout then turn L across main road to re-join voie verte. Descend gently through woodland and pass factory L on site of former **Brives-Charansac** station (31.5km, 616m) ([refreshments](#), [camping](#)).

Where railway trackbed ends, go ahead on cycle track winding through wasteland and pass under motorway bridge. Bear L beside motorway L and continue beside slip road, Fork R (sp Centre Ville) and immediately cross road onto cycle track L. Follow this beside railway L with road below R, then cross road and continue past bus station and railway station (both L). Continue ahead on Ave Charles Dupuy to reach stage end at crossroads beside central post-office in **Le Puy-en-Velay** (35km, 626m).

## Stage 3

*The route out of Le Puy-en-Velay has changed.*

p56 From outside central post office in **Le Puy-en-Velay**, follow Bvd de la République N and continue into Bvd Maréchal Joffre. Cross bridge over River Borne and go ahead at mini-roundabout on Ave des Champs-Élysées through Chadrac ([refreshments](#)). At next round-about keep R ahead (sp Clermont Ferrand) and continue into Bvd Montgiraud (sp Lavoûte, D103). Pass under railway bridge, then fork L ahead at roundabout (Bvd de la Petite-Mer, D103) joining cycle lane R. Go ahead at next roundabout (first exit, D103, sp Lavoûte-sur-Loire) to re-join original route across Loire.

p58 At beginning of **Lavoûte-Polignac** do not fork L beside wayside cross, instead continue along main road (D103) into village. Pass church L and re-join original route by continuing ahead on bridge over Loire.

## Stage 5

*This section is in the process of becoming part of VèloLoire cycle route V71. From Aurec to Montrond-les-Bains the route has been published but not yet waymarked. Beyond Montrond, V71 waymarks have been erected. The new route differs from the original route leaving Aurec, for short distances between Bonson–St Cyrien and Rivas–Cuzieu, then for 14.5km between Montrond–Feurs.*

p67 After railway crossing in **Aurec**, fork L (Rue de St Geneix) beside MGPA factory R and continue to riverbank. Turn R on gravel track beside river and follow this under electricity pylon line. Where track turns R away from river, fork L on narrow path through trees and continue beside river. Emerge beside boat landing quay L and continue ahead through two gravel carparks (accommodation, refreshments). At end of second carpark, bear L onto road and cross bridge over river Semène into **Semène** village ([refreshments](#)).

Follow road winding through village to reach roundabout decorated with bird boxes. Go ahead (second exit, sp La Soulière) uphill, then pass house 2 on R and at top of hill fork L (Allée des Pépinières) downhill to reach Pl du Lavoir in centre of **St Paul-en-Cornillon** (5km, 497m). (*St Paul-en-Cornillon (pop 1350) is spread over the basalt cliffs of an old volcanic plug, with an 11th-century château sitting on the top*). Go ahead over crossroads (Rampe du Château) steeply uphill, then turn sharply L at crossroads and pass château behind walls L. Fork L (Corniche des Écureuils) beside stone cross L, winding downhill to T-junction. Turn L (Montée de Furnant), then pass under railway bridge and bear R on main road with Loire L to reach roundabout in **Le Pertuiset** (7km, 436m).

*p71* In **Bonson**, continue ahead over railway crossing (*do not turn R into Rue des Chambons*) then go ahead over roundabout (Rue de la Becque, second exit, D108, sp St Cyprien) into beginning of St Cyprien. Go ahead again over next roundabout (Rue des Bruyasses, second exit, D108, sp Craintilleux), using cycle lane R, then turn R beside house 1 (Rue du Tabot). Bear L at T-junction (Rue Germaine Robin) into centre of **St Cyprien** (27.5km, 373m) (refreshments). Go ahead at mini roundabout (Rue Antoine Bufferne) to re-join original route.

*p73* At crossroads at beginning of **Rivas**, turn L (Ch de la Vorzillière) (*do not go ahead through village*) then pass entrance to concrete factory R and fork R (sp La Vorzillière) on quiet road winding through fields to **Cuzieu** (38.5km, 350m).

*p74* Leaving **Montrond-les-Bains**, turn R just before Loire bridge (Rue de la Loire, D115, sp Marclopt). Continue ahead at first road junction then turn R into turning circle for school buses. Pass between schools L and R, then fork R (Rue des Montagnes du Soir) to reach crossroads. Turn L (Ave de la Route Bleue, D1082) then first R (Rue de Ravatey, sp Complexe sportif Ravatey). Continue ahead (Rue des Rotys), past fire station L, into open country. Cross railway and continue to edge of **St André-le-Puy** (47km, 360m).

Turn L at T-junction (Rte de St-Cyr, D16) out of village then after 1.3km turn L (D112, sp Feurs). Pass through Magneux le Gabion (51km, 357m) and at end of hamlet bear R (Rte des Étangs, D122, sp Feurs) continuing through fields to reach beginning of Feurs. Turn L at T-junction (D18, sp Feurs) then keep R at fork (Rte de Valeille). Pass grain silos R and continue into Rue Marc Seguin, using cycle lane R. Where cycle lane ends at crossroads, turn L (Bvd Pasteur, sp Centre Ville) and go ahead over railway crossing. Turn R (Rue Parmentier) to reach stage end at crossroads beside war memorial in Place du 11 Novembre in **Feurs** (58.5km, 346m).

## Stage 6

*Still following V71, a new route is followed for 22km from Feurs to Pinay. Later in the stage, the route crosses Villerest lake and follows a new route into Roanne.*

*p76* From war memorial in **Feurs**, cycle N through Place 11 du Novembre. At end, cross Rue de la Varenne and take cycle track into woods immediately L of Martyrs' chapel (*the Martyrs' chapel, in Greek classical style, commemorates 80 victims of the terror that followed the French revolution*). Follow track winding through wooded parkland and emerge on road. Turn R (Rte de Civens, D107) then continue through carpark R of road. After carpark, continue ahead on dual carriageway (sp Civens). Immediately after sign for end of Feurs, fork L through Bellevue. At end of built-up area, continue through fields to reach T-junction. Turn R over railway crossing and after

100m turn L on narrow road winding through fields. Pass timber yard R and go ahead on Le Grand Chemin. Bear L at T-junction (Rue de la Libération, D10) into **Pouilly-lès-Feurs** (6.5km, 365m) ([refreshments](#)).

*(**Pouilly-lès-Feurs** (pop 1250) is a small walled town that grew-up around a 10th-century Clunaic priory with an 11th century Romanesque church and the ruins of an ancient castle).*

Go ahead L over crossroads (Rue de Cluny, D10, sp Balbigny) and cycle out of town. Turn L (sp Le Buis) beside modern white house onto quiet country road. Immediately before railway crossing, turn R beside railway and continue through fields. Go ahead over mini-roundabout (Rue Jean-Claude Rhodamel) to reach larger roundabout on edge of Balbigny. Go ahead (2nd exit, Rue du Four à Chaux, sp Balbigny centre) to reach road junction 70m before railway crossing in **Balbigny** (11.5km, 335m) ([refreshments](#), [station](#)).

*(In the early 19th century, **Balbigny** (pop 3000) was an important port on the Loire. Traditional Loire flat bottomed barges carrying St Étienne coal downstream from St Rambert would stop here to change crews before continuing to Roanne. This ended abruptly in 1832, when one of the first railways in France opened between Andrézieux-Bouthéon and Roanne specifically to transport coal from the St Étienne coalfield).*

Turn R (Rue de l'Industrie), passing bus station L. At end of town, fork L following road beside railway L. In Lachat ([accommodation](#)), just before road bears R away from railway, turn L through barriers onto narrow bridge over railway. Go ahead across main road (Rte de Bernard, D56, sp Pinay) and follow road bearing L in Bernard ([refreshments](#)). Pass Pralery L ([camping](#)) then continue to reach Loire and pass under motorway bridge. Continue beside river L, passing under two road bridges and after second bridge at La Digue ascend round hairpin bend to reach **Pinay** (22km, 410m).

*p79* After passing **Château de la Roche** Continue with view of Loire (actually Villerest lake) in gorge below L, descending to cross an arm of lake. Ascend away from river past turn-off for campsite ([refreshments](#), [camping](#)), then road undulates to reach triangular junction. Fork L (D45, sp Le Pont de Presle) and follow road steeply downhill to Pont de Presle bridge over narrow part of Villerest lake (36.5km, 333m). Cross lake to Port de Bully ([refreshments](#)) and follow road (Rte du Pont de Presle, D45) winding first through forest then fields and ascending steeply to **Bully** (40km, 461m) ([refreshments](#)).

Continue ascending through village to reach crossroads and turn R (Rte du Charizet, D203, sp St Jean-St Maurice). Follow winding road undulating through forest then ascend into hilltop town of **St Jean-St Maurice-sur-Loire** (48.5km, 377m) ([accommodation](#), [refreshments](#), [tourist office](#)).

Follow Rue de l'Union winding through town then continue (Rte des Bruyères, D203) undulating through fields to reach crossroads (52km, 359m). Turn R (Rte de St Sulpice, D18, sp Villerest) following road uphill to Les Hauts de Roy ([refreshments](#)) then descend to reach roundabout in **Villerest** (55km, 354m) ([accommodation](#), [refreshments](#), [camping](#)).

Continue ahead (first exit, Rte de Seigne, D18, sp Commelle-Vernay) winding downhill to reach junction with road over Villerest dam. Bear L (D84, sp Roanne), (*do not cross dam*) and after 800m turn R (Ch des Charettes) then bear L through barriers steeply downhill. Go ahead at crossroads to re-join D84 and follow this, bearing L beside Loire ([refreshments](#)). Continue beside river (Ch de Haulage), with gorge-side cliffs rising L, to reach beginning of Roanne.

Continue ahead into Rue Claude Bochart and where this bears L beside house 124, fork R into Ch du Rivage {*Ch du Rivage is one-way street with contra-flow cycling permitted*). Emerge beside Loire and continue on cycle track along flood dyke, then bear L before railway bridge to reach Quai de Renaison. Continue ahead to crossroads and turn R (Rue Hoche). Pass under railway bridge and over river Renaison. Fork R at traffic lights (D84, sp Le Coteau) and continue under road bridge to reach large gravel surfaced square in front of Port de Roanne canal basin in **Roanne** (63km, 275m).

## Stage 7

*This stage has been re-routed to follow the tow-path of the canal de Roanne à Digoin and a voie verte along an old railway trackbed almost all the way to Digoin.*

p83 From middle of gravel surfaced square at S end of **Port de Roanne** canal basin follow unnamed road E across square then bear L (Quai de l'Île) to pass along E side of canal basin. Follow road bearing R, then turn L (Quai du Commandant de Foucauld) over small bridge and continue with Loire R to Place Thiodet. Bear L before fire station then turn immediately R beside canal. Cycle under motorway bridge and continue past high security prison and Roanne Arsenal munitions factory both on opposite bank. Follow towpath past **Cornillon** (8.5km to reach road junction beside **Briennon** bridge (15km, 260m) (*to visit Briennon* ([accommodation](#), [refreshments](#)) *turn L over bridge*).

Turn R (D4) using cycle lane R and cross bridge over Loire. Immediately after bridge turn R (Rue du Port), then after 500m turn L on asphalt cycle track on voie verte along trackbed of disused railway through **Pouilly-sous-Charlieu** (16.5km, 263m) ([accommodation](#), [refreshments](#), [camping](#)). Go ahead over crossroads and pass old station R. Cross river Sornin then fork L at junction of tracks (do not pass under road bridge) and follow cycle track beside main road R. After 350m, follow cycle track turning L and R to re-join course of disused railway and continue to **Iguerande** (23.5km, 260m) ([accommodation](#), [refreshments](#)).

Continue on voie verte, at first parallel with main road then past hamlets of **Champceau** and **St Martin-du-Lac**. Cross main road and continue on cycle track to reach T-junction. Turn R (Rte du Port d'Artaix) then after 60m turn L and R to reach site of old station on edge of **Marcigny** (33km, 249m).

From station site follow cycle track along railway trackbed out of town and over road bridge. Continue past hamlets of **Baugy**, **Réffy** and **La Villeneuve** to reach site of Vindecy station R (41.5km, 251m).

Follow cycle track straight ahead for 5.5km then bear L and R beside D382. After 200m, turn L across road to re-join route of old railway and pass between **La Plaine** R and St Yan airfield L (*St Yan airfield houses ENAC, a college which teaches instrument flying techniques to commercial airline pilots*). Fork R beside carpark, then cross river Arconce to reach road junction in **St Yan** (49km, 240m) ([refreshments](#)) and turn L (Rue Jules Ferry).

Just before T-junction, turn L on cycle track and L again after 40m onto D982. Continue through **Varenne-St Germain** (50.5km, 240m) ([accommodation](#)) then ascend through **Les Goguignons** (53.5km, 269m) and Tranche Gorge. Cross bridge over motorway then turn L at roundabout (VC9, fourth exit, sp Digoin Stades). Follow road downhill then fork L after 1km (Rue des Perruts). Pass Observa'Loire visitor centre L to reach bridge over Canal Latéral à Loire in **Digoin** (58km, 239m).

## Stage 8

*After visiting Digoin the tow-path of the canal Latéral à la Loire is used to re-join the original route in Chavanne.*

*P90 From W side of Rue des Perruts bridge over canal Latéral à la Loire in **Digoin**, follow Levée du Canal Latéral S down to towpath and continue ahead over Loire on Pont canal de Digoin aqueduct. Pass lock 1 (Digoin), then fork L to continue on towpath past **Chavanne** (2.5km, 230m) (*Warning! Alongside each lock the surface changes to loose gravel to slow down cyclists*).*

## Stage 22

*A waymarked route through the old Trélazé slate quarries provides a alternative way to visit Angers.*

*p190 In centre of **La Daguenière** turn R beside house 92 into Place de l'Église, then dog-leg L and R in front of church and follow Rue du Stade out of village past sports club L. Turn L at T-junction, then fork R and turn R on quiet road through fields to reach another T-junction. Turn L and after 200m R continuing through fields to crossroads. Turn L, then R at next T-junction and continue over drainage canal. Zig-zag R and L over flood dyke to reach ferry ramp and catch cable ferry across river Authion (46.5km, 18m).*

*Continue ahead away from river for 300m, then turn L at crossing of tracks on cycle track along Levée Napoléon) flood dyke (*Levee Napoléon was constructed in 1856 under the order of Napoléon III after a flood inundated the slate quarries at Trélazé trapping 2000 miners on the mine waste tips*). Pass Le Puit de Napoléon lake R and turn R on cycle track winding through scrubland. Just before carpark for Arena Loire sports hall, turn L at five-way junction and continue on cycle track through Parc des Ardoisières.*

*The **Trélazé Ardoisières**, which spread over a large area between Trélazé and St Barthélemy-d'Anjou, are former slate quarries that first opened in 1406. Originally all slate was extracted from open pits until the first underground mine opened in 1838. As all the easily reached slate was exhausted, so more activity moved underground with the last open quarry closing in 1899. Peak production was reached in 1911, but decline set in after the Second World War as demand for natural slate fell. The last mine closed in 2014 when all the affordably mined stone was exhausted. When they closed, they were the last operational slate quarries in France. Eight old mine shafts, tailings mounds of mine waste and several flooded pits remain. There is a museum which explains the history of local slate mining.*

*Cross bridge over main road, then follow track bending sharply L to reach road. Turn R (Rue Ambroise Croizat), using cycle lane R, then bear R at T-junction. Continue between industrial estate L and derelict slate workings R to roundabout. Take first exit (D117, sp Toutes Directions) on cycle track beside slate waste tip R. At next roundabout, go straight ahead through barriers on cycle track between first and second exits. Follow this winding through old slate workings and passing two flooded quarries, both R. Dogleg L and R over staggered crossing, then fork L and pass under road bridge. Pass allotments L, then bear L to reach road. Turn R (Rue Pierre et Marie Curie), then after 300m, fork R (Rue du 8 Mai 1945) using cycle track R. Continue to pedestrian crossing, then cross road and turn back on other side for short distance before forking R on cycle track winding through **La Papierie** mine workings (52.5km, 29m).*

Follow cycle track bearing L opposite entrance to Villechien compost producing plant. Emerge beside road (Rue de la Papeterie) and continue to roundabout. Turn R (first exit, Rue St Léonard) then follow this ahead under motorway and dogleg L and R ahead over complicated staggered junction with two mini roundabouts. Pass Raymond Kopa stadium (Angers FC) L and go ahead over dual-carriageway. Continue for 1km, passing over railway bridge into (Rue Célestine-Port), then turn sharply L (Rue Paul Langevin) at five-way road junction. At next crossroads turn R (Rue Bressigny) and continue to reach dual-carriageway with tram tracks in the middle. Turn L (Rue du Haras) then turn R at next crossroads (Bvd du Roi René, sp Rennes). Follow this to reach road junction in centre of **Angers** (58.5km, 38m) with statue of Roi René in middle of road and walls of Château Angers ahead.

### **Stage 23**

*The exit from Angers has changed slightly.*

*P193* After crossing Pont de la Basse Chaine over river Maine, fork R downhill then bear R (Bvd Henri Arnaud) beside riverside gardens R. Where gardens end, turn R (Quai des Carmes and immediately R again (Cale de la Savatte) beside marina L. Dogleg L and R to pass under bridge and continue beside river with terracing R. Where this ends, zig-zag L and R up to higher level and turn sharply L parallel with river Maine L, re-joining original route.

### **Stage 26**

*The previous provisional inland route between Paimbœuf and St Brevin-les-Pins has been replaced by a new waymarked cycle track beside the Loire estuary.*

*P220* Go ahead (Rue des Cordiers) at mini-roundabout in **Paimbœuf** past campsite then after second roundabout cross road and continue ahead (D77, sp Corsept) using cycle track L. Fork L (Rue de la Mairie, sp St Père-en-Retz) into **Corsept** (46km, 5m) ([refreshments](#)).

Pass church L and follow road, bearing R (Rue de l'Estuaire). Fork R and continue past cemetery R. Turn R beside carpark R, then at end of carpark turn R and L onto cycle track. Follow this around roundabout and turn L at second exit (Rue de la Maison Verte). Fork R beside sluice and follow cycle track bearing L beside Loire. Continue for 5.5km, then dog-leg L and R beside Metalu factory. Continue beside Loire, eventually bearing L away from river, then turn sharply R opposite gypsy caravan encampment onto gravel cycle track back to Loire. Follow this, bearing L beside estuary and passing hospital L with view of **Pont de St Nazaire** bridge ahead. Where this ends, bear L and continue on road (Ave de Nantes) to reach T-junction. Turn R (Ave Bordon) to re-join original route.