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We arrived in the Loire Valley Friday night a bit overwhelmed with the options this place affords. Over 40 major chateaux dot the valley between here and Paris, with hundreds of minor palaces sprinkled every few hundred meters, it seems.



Château de Chenonceau

Roger and I are not really excited about the whole chateau scene - these amazing palaces seem to represent a period of French and European history of going just a little bit overboard, spending ridiculous amounts of resources outdoing the Joneses and benefitting just a tiny fraction of the population.



Château de Chenonceau

Nevertheless, what was left behind is spectacular to behold, and we spent yesterday exploring Chateau de Chenonceau, considered the most beautiful of the palaces, and the most visited.



The Great Hall

We took a walk through the interior of this fabulous chateau, checking out the Great Hall, added by Catherine de Medici after she ousted her deceased husband's mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Her husband, Henry II had given this chateau to Diane, whom he held in high esteem. She was quite a bit older than he, had been his tutor of manners when he was a boy, then graduated to become his mistress as he got older. Seems quite a mixed up stew of hormones, emotions and money!



The lower bridge and Great Hall of the Château de Chenonceau

The lower, bridge part of the chateau was added by Diane, then the Great Hall was added above the bridge by Catherine. This chateau is considered the Woman's Chateau because of the number of prominent French females involved in its ownership and design.



Can't remember whose boudoir this was, but it wasn't the maid's or the cook's

We hope to combine a visit through the interior of the Chateau de Chenonceau with a walk around the exterior and through the adjacent countryside, along the Cher River. The result is either a 10 km or 7 km walk, depending upon how much time we have.

We'll be back tomorrow evening and have photos to share...it's a pretty unique experience along the Loire!

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