

# Airvault / Parthenay

## La Vélo Francette: Normandy / Atlantic by bike



**Départ**  
Airvault

**Arrivée**  
Parthenay

**Durée**  
2 h 28 min

**Distance**  
37,07 Km

**Niveau**  
I cycle often

**Thématique**  
Nature & small heritage,  
Cities and picturesque  
villages

An unforgettable stage, along quiet roads. The village of Airvault, with its abbey church, covered market and underground fountain, sets the tone. Next, the moated château and village of St-Loup-sur-Thouet will surprise you. Then the Lac du Cébron provides room to relax before continuing along the Thouet, crossing via a railway viaduct to reach the haughty medieval fortified town of Parthenay.

### The route

Follow the signs for Le Thouet à Vélo (in due course La Vélo Francette will be signposted too). The stage is along roads with motorised traffic, plus with some stretches along farm tracks. There is a long slope after Le Gerson, at the level of La Maillolière's motocross course, before reaching Parthenay. There is a dedicated cycle track you take at the place named Puyrajou (La Peyratte).

### Tourist Offices

- [Airvault Tourist Office](#)
- [Gâtine Tourist Office](#)

### Buses

Parthenay SNCF station: many places nearby can be reached by bus: line 10 Thouars <> Parthenay / line 12 Thouars <> Parthenay <> Niort / line 32 Thouars <> Poitiers  
<http://mobilite79.fr/>

### Don't miss

**Airvault:** designated a Petite Cité de caractère , the village [of Airvault](#) grew up around the Augustinian abbey here, one of the greatest in the Poitou region. Visit the village's medieval centre, including the abbey church, the covered market, the underground fountain, the Musée Jacques Guidez (on Poitou crafts and traditions), and the market, held Saturday mornings in the covered market

**St-Loup-sur-Thouet:** designated a Petite Cité de caractère , the village stretches alongside the Thouet. Already by the 12th century watermills and tanneries lined the riverbanks. As to the fine 17th-century château, built for the Gouffier family, it's said that Claude Gouffier inspired the character of the Marquis de Carabas in Charles Perrault's famed fable, Puss in Boots. Enjoy the island heart of the village, with its timber-frame houses. The Lac du Cébron is a popular destination nearby.

**Gourgé:** St-Hilaire Church; fords and stepping stones over the Thouet

**Lhoumois:** The Jardins du Gué ('Gardens on the Ford'): a 4-hectare floral garden that has been created with passion.

**La Peyratte:** Notre-Dame Church

**Parthenay:** [the historic St-Jacques Quarter](#) and its medieval gateway; the old château; the churches of St-Pierre and Ste-Croix; the ramparts

