Maillezais / Fontenay-le-Comte

Vendée Vélo Tour

Départ
Maillezais

Arrivée
Fontenay-le-Comte

Durée
3 h 30 min

Distance
38,95 Km

Niveau
I begin / Family

Thématique
Nature & small heritage

Before the Vendée Vélo Tour cycle route leads you away from the Marais Poitevin, explore a bit more of its wetlands by riding to the pretty port of Courdault at the end of a major canal. Midway along this stage, you reach the village of Nieul-sur-l'Autise, designated a Petite Cité de Caractère for its cultural attractions. It’s a good place to stop for lunch and to appreciate Nieul Abbey and the Maison de la Meunerie, the latter featuring one of the last-surviving watermills in the region. Further on, you can branch off for the Plage de Chassenon and make the most of the lake’s beach, perhaps enjoying a well-deserved dip. To give you strength for this stage’s final stretch, make a little detour to La Lutine tea shop in Saint-Michel-le-Cloucq to sample some tasty local specialities.

The route

Between Maillezais and Rives d'Autise, you ride along a small parish lane and along the towpath beside the Canal de la Vieille Autise. Take care, though, on the 400m you need to cycle along the D68A road at Liez. Next, you continue in the direction of Saint-Michel-le-Cloucq and ride along a greenway, passing the picnic area at the Moulin Guissais at Xanton Chassenon. Along this stage, follow the signposting for Vendée Vélo.

Don't miss

- **Nieul-sur-l'Autise**: a village designated a Petite Cité de Caractère for its cultural heritage, including fine limestone buildings, plus an architectural gem, the Abbatiale Saint-Vincent, and also one of the region’s last watermills still in action.
    - **Abbaye Saint-Vincent**: unique in Western France, an architectural treasure trove, Nieul’s abbey is one of the few Poitou monasteries to have remained almost intact, with its church and monastic buildings, plus the only Romanesque cloister in Western France to have been entirely preserved. Nowadays, a visit here combines history with contemporary digital technology, to help appeal to all the family. (Accueil Vélo accredited site)
    - **Maison de la Meunerie**: this charming edifice in its bucolic setting contains a watermill dating back to 1728 that still works and acts as a place for transmitting local know-how and traditions. A lively presentation relates the life of a miller at the start of the 20th century. (Accueil Vélo accredited site)
- **Espace de Loisirs du Lac de Chassenon**: nestling in a meander in the Vendée River, this outdoor lake with leisure centre offers bathing in summer, or the possibility of simply relaxing with family or friends on the fine sandy beach. Try out the water toboggan and outdoor games, or then make the most of the shaded picnic area. (Accueil Vélo accredited site)
- **Saint-Michel-le-Cloucq**: La Lutine, on the edge of the legendary Mervent Forest, is a bakery where the baker happily introduces visitors to his

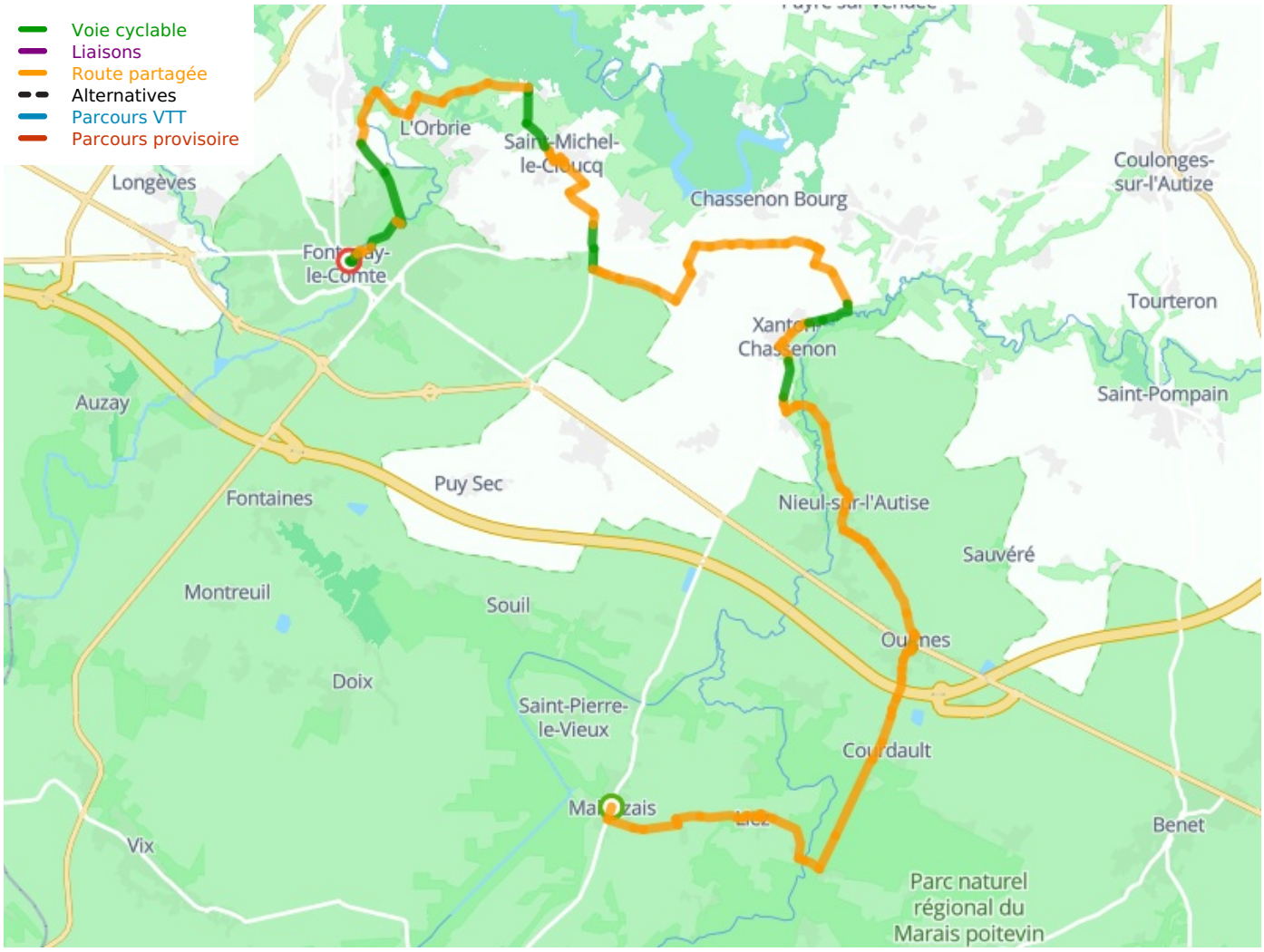
culinary world, including his brioche, which has won a medal many times for its typical Vendée style, although he produces many further specialities.

SNCF Train stations

- Note that there are no train stations along this stage; the closest stations are in the towns of Luçon and Niort (the latter with high-speed TGV connections)

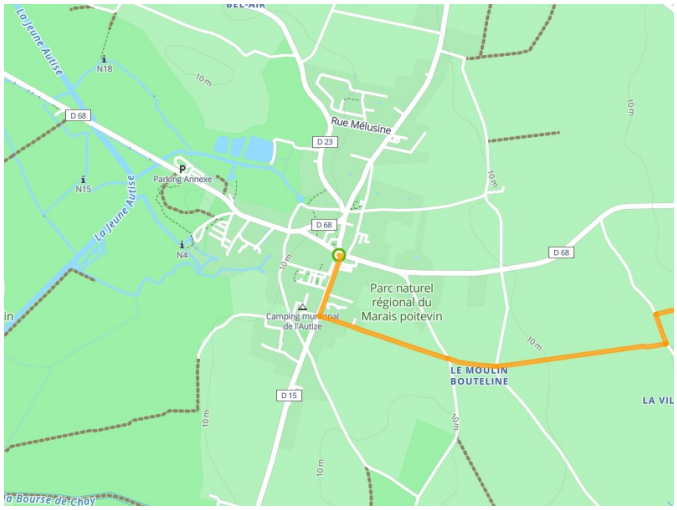
SNCF bus services:

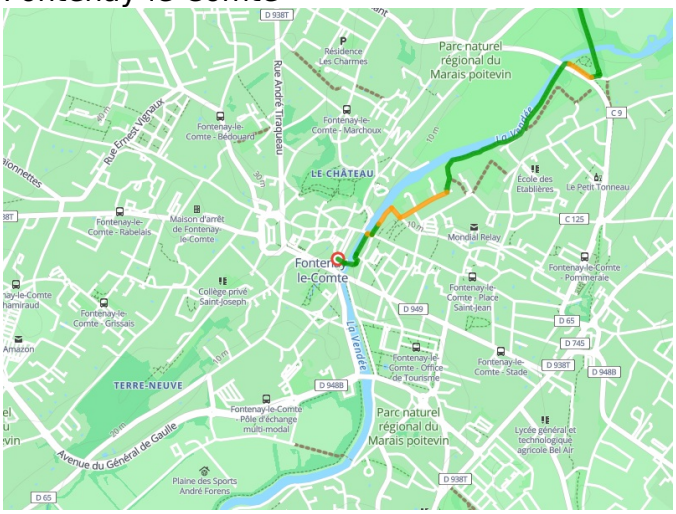
- Fontenay-le-Comte: lines 15, 16 and 17 to and from La Roche-sur-Yon, Niort and La Rochelle
- Stop at Oulmes (close to Nieul): on line 6 Fontenay-le-Comte <> Niort



Départ

Maillezais



Arrivée

Fontenay-le-Comte