

Loches Cité royale



TWICE AS MANY STORIES

PROFESSIONALS

2024

Un site du | Conseil départemental d'Indre & Loire

TOURAINES
LE DÉPARTEMENT





Highlights:

- Immersive visit in 7 languages
- Mecca of French history
- 2 unique monuments: an 11th-century keep and a 15th- century royal residence

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Twice as many stories

Not to be missed

- The dizzying climb up the keep
- The underground
- The iron cage
- The panoramic view from the top of the new tower
- Discovering the patio overlooking the Val de l'Indre

Two monuments for a unique experience

While Renaissance castles abound in the Loire Valley, medieval cities are much rarer. Loches has one of the most beautiful fortified cities in France, with a remarkable infrastructure and keep, and dominates both the town and the pastoral Indre Valley. This jewel of medieval architecture once welcomed Joan of Arc and Anne of Brittany, and it was home to the favourite and chief mistress of Charles VII, Agnes Sorel.

In the landscape of Loire Valley castles, the 37-metre keep is an unusual structure. It is a masterpiece of 11th-century military architecture and one of the best preserved of its kind in Europe. Its many painted and engraved inscriptions immerse visitors in prison life of the era.

The site offers a unique tour that uses sound, visuals, and digital media to introduce visitors to important figures and architectural features.



One site, two monuments

The two monuments – the residence and the keep – are the property of the Indre and Loire departmental council and have been grouped together under a common designation: the Royal City. This name refers to the monuments' topography (a fortified city) and their history (royal, if we consider the number of sovereigns who passed through or resided in Loches in the late Middle Ages).

A Visit Back in Time

The Royal City of Loches offers an interactive trail with sound booths, informational signage, videos, projections: fifteen areas (six in the residence and nine in the keep) have been staged and furnished to take visitors back in time, totalling nearly 700 m2 and suitable for all ages. These attractive and varied interactive features deal with different themes: iconic figures, how these spaces were used, architectural details and so on.

An immersion in five centuries of history

Visiting the Residence

- The first floor of the residence is the main space that has been staged.
- The visit emphasizes the different spaces through lighting, soundscapes, special furnishings (bed, platform, canopy), and multimedia (sound seating, projections).

Visiting the Keep

- The Round Tower and the Martelet Tower are the main spaces that have been staged.
- Both theme-based spaces are introduced with special lighting, a lectern, and sound cues.
- The visit includes multimedia (touch screens, sound cues) and hands-on activities (a chessboard).

> Mediation
media FR/GB

> Access plan in 7
languages FR/EN/DE/
IT/ES/NL/RU



The Keep

A dive into the prison world of the late Middle Ages

Erected in the 11th century to defend the vulnerable side of the fortress, the keep is an impressive structure that, together with the Round Tower and the Martelet Tower, forms an imposing ensemble that can be reached from the royal residence via the alleys of the medieval city. The top of the keep offers visitors a spectacular view.

Towers

The Keep of Loches

This “palace tower” is impressive thanks to its dimensions, level of comfort (lighting, fireplaces, latrines), and careful construction. It is a gem of medieval castle architecture.

For a structure built in the early 11th century, the Keep of Loches, which stands 37 metres tall, is also remarkably well preserved.

Equipped with a complex circulation system, the main tower was heated by stacking fireplaces and illuminated by numerous arched windows.

The Martelet Tower

The Martelet Tower seems to have been destined for incarceration from its very inception.

The lower part of the tower is built directly into the side of the rocky outcrop, which houses a network of galleries.

The Dungeon Cage

Upon his accession to the throne in 1460, Louis XI completed the conversion of the keep of Loches into a royal prison, a process already begun by Charles VII. The military site became a place of confinement. The king's (contested) reputation for cruelty towards his enemies was linked to a symbol: "iron cages". There is a full-scale reproduction of one of the iron cages here. A new visitor experience includes an 8-question quiz on what is fact and what is fiction when it comes to these cages.

The New Tower



The New Tower was built in the 15th century and is made up of different spaces: **the interpretation room, A Place, A History, the 'If Walls Could Talk' room**, which covers the keep's history and major stages of construction over five centuries, and the **Dungeon of the Eccentrics** which gives visitors a chance to see and understand one of the uses of the state prison in the 18th century. Finally, the **duel room** on the 2nd floor of the round tower, with its exceptional graffiti dating from the troubled period of the wars of religion in the second part of the 16th century, and the **dungeon of the rebels**, which presents the unusual fate of Duke John II of Alençon (1409-1476), a companion of Joan of Arc who was accused of the crime of "lèse-majesté" against his sovereign and royal cousin Charles VII. The New Tower ends with a patio offering a remarkable panoramic view of the city.

EXTRAORDINARY... PRISON ART

Graffiti from the late 19th century (house, mill, lighthouse) are remnants from when the Round Tower served as a departmental jail.

Graffiti in the Martelet Tower prove that the structure was used as a jail in the from the 18th to the early 20th centuries. Here, one can find pencil drawings and inscriptions, engravings of crucifixes, a church, a ship, faces, profiles, crosses, tools, and even a large inscription in Latin.

D A T E S

1013 — 1035

Fulk III, the Black, Count of Anjou, built a **four-storey** quadrangular keep overlooking the castle's southern front.



1440 — 1460

Charles VII built a gate tower and a new main tower (the **Round Tower** or "new tower").



SECOND HALF FROM THE 15TH CENTURY

Construction of the **Martelet Tower**, probably during the reign of Louis XI.

1452-1508

Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan. The Duke of Milan, rival to the kings of France and great patron of Leonardo da Vinci was held captive in the prison of Loches for 4 years. He died there.





Travel through time!

HistoPad® opens the doors of time to plunge visitors into the Middle Ages.

Thanks to digital technology and the latest innovations in augmented reality, visiting the thousand-year-old keep of Loches has become a unique experience for all to enjoy!

Restoring architectural features that are now missing

Spaces that either no longer exist or were converted are brought back to life for visitors to enjoy: siege of the ramparts and battle sites, spaces under construction, exploring the medieval jails, a large room in the keep dating from the 11th century. Today, this space on the main floor of the main tower, which once served as a ceremonial, audience, and banquet hall, has no floor or ceiling. An 11th-century administrative scene is now depicted here featuring Fulk III, the Black, Count of Anjou surrounded by lords of his army.

Immersing visitors in an atmosphere

This is probably the most spectacular feature of the HistoPad®: 360° immersion experiences of spaces, fitted out with period furnishings and recalling the ambience of the time, as visitors explore the premises. Visitors can now set foot on medieval battlefields and peek in on the private chamber of Count Fulk III! There are 10 immersive experiences in the Keep of Loches.

A Fun Visit

Children can take part in a treasure hunt, while bigger kids can take historical selfies. This monument is a fun and experiential place for shared moments.

New

A new visitor experience with HistoPad®:

The 1204/1205 siege as if you were there!

With HistoPad, you can immerse yourself in the decisive siege that turned Loches into the territory of Philip Augustus, King of France.

Bonus features:

All visitors are given the opportunity **to use this experiential device**, which is **included in the monument's entrance fee**.

Available in 7 languages: French, English, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch and Russian.



The Royal Residence

A Mecca of French History

A gem of late medieval architecture (a radiant and flamboyant Gothic style), the royal residence of Loches features a terraced façade overlooking a City of Art and History. Visitors enjoy a sweeping view of the Indre Valley and the vast Loches Forest.

Many historical figures and influential women have left their marks on Loches, which was a favourite residence and recreation home for members of the House of Valois. It includes two parts, with structures from different periods: the residence of Louis I of Anjou (14th century), which was extended under Charles VIII and Louis XII with the Anne of Brittany residence (15th century).

- Joan of Arc met Charles VII there. After forcing the English to lift the siege of Orleans on 8 May 1429, at the end of May 1429, Joan of Arc went to meet the king who was then residing in Loches in order to convince him to receive "a worthy crown" in Reims. She shook off his apathy and captivated him with her charisma and persuasion.
- As the queen of France, Anne of Brittany made frequent trips to the Royal City of Loches, leaving her mark on the edifice with her commission of a flamboyant Gothic style oratory. Through her court, she generated an artistic output that would leave a mark on her era. The decorations in the room dedicated to Anne of Brittany are a testament to her influence.
- Agnes Sorel met Charles VII in 1443. From a small Picardy nobility, she was the next in line at the court of the Duchess of Anjou and captivated the king with her beauty and wit. Charles VII brought her into the service of his wife, Marie d'Anjou, and she became his favourite.

THE GREAT HOURS OF ANNE OF BRITTANY

In 1508, Anne of Brittany ordered a painting by the Tours native Jean Bourdichon (1457-1521), who was a "painter and valet to the king". Bourdichon created this masterpiece comprising 476 pages and 337 border illuminations known as The Great Hours of Anne of Brittany. This book of prayers is a summary of the fauna and flora that Anne enjoyed every day in the Amboise, Blois, and Loches gardens. At once a spiritual book and a natural encyclopedia, this artefact is part of a display that brings life to its images.



This facsimile dating from 1841 and printed in just a few copies is kept in the collections of the Royal City. This book was beautifully restored by Olivier Maupin, a restorer of old books and graphic documents and founder of the Training Centre for the Restoration of Written Heritage (CFRPE).





ZOOM IN ON...

AGNES SOREL, LA DAME DE BEAUTE (LADY OF BEAUTY) (1422–1450)

Agnes was a woman of letters and a great beauty whose looks were famous among her contemporaries. In fact, the Tours painter Jean Fouquet depicted her beauty in his Melun Diptych.

At court, Agnes Sorel acted as a patron and accompanied the king on his travels and stays in Touraine.

Her extravagant clothing and particularly her status as the king's official favourite mistress scandalized the court. Madly in love, the king lavished her with jewels and land, making her a princess without the title. When the king was at his Loches residence, she was at his side, while Queen Marie of Anjou remained at the fortress in Chinon.

Agnes Sorel brought faithful and committed advisers into Charles VII's entourage who served the interests of the kingdom and helped strengthen royal power.

When rumours emerged of a plot against the king, an alarmed Agnes Sorel, pregnant with her fourth child, joined Charles VII in Jumieges where he was camping with his army. That is where she met her untimely death (at around age 28) due to "stomach troubles". The circumstances surrounding her death are still a mystery.

In 2005, under the leadership of Dr. Philippe Charlier, 22 French doctors and scientists studied the skeletal remains of Agnes de Sorel, showing acute mercury poisoning to be her cause of death, but there is no evidence as to whether or not she was murdered. Rumours suggested she was poisoned under orders by the future Louis XI, then the Dauphin, but no one knows the truth.

A marble and alabaster recumbent effigy, which lies in the Collegiate Church Saint-Ours, was beautifully restored to its original condition during a restoration campaign in 2015/2016.



ZOOM IN ON...

LOUIS XI (Bourges, 1423 - 1460 Plessis-Lès-Tours, 1483)

As the son of Charles VII, he was brought up in the royal house in Loches where he was immersed in the intrigues of the court.

He accompanied his father on hunting trips and attended the campaigns and negotiations that marked the end of the Hundred Years' War.

But his relationship with his father was strained. In particular, he was critical of his father's affair with Agnès Sorel. The heir apparent actively conspired to thwart the king's authority. He joined the rebellion of great feudal lords

(Alençon, Anjou, Bourbon) against Charles VII. The Praguerie (1440) saw the captain and the royal garrison of Loches turn against the king. The king was forced to send his troops to win back his "good city". Louis became a threat and was exiled to the Dauphiné by the king (1447).

Upon his accession to the throne in 1460, Louis XI completed the conversion of the fortress of Loches into a royal prison, a process already begun by Charles VII. He also completed the reinforcement of the site with the construction of the Martelet Tower and the barbican. His (disputed) reputation for cruelty towards his enemies is embodied by the symbol of the iron cages he used (the "*fillettes du roi*" or "king's little girls" were actually shackles that were placed around prisoners' necks) and which popular depictions have often placed in the enclosure of the Loches keep.



The Medieval-Inspired Garden

A Green Oasis at the Foot of the Keep

Recreated from illuminations and the structural elements of Middle-Age gardens, this walled garden reveals the three functions they used to have: nourishing, healing and relaxing. It is composed of eight squares of plants classified according to the colour of their flowers. It is lined with branches of braided chestnut and contains medicinal, dyeing and vegetable plants. Fruit trees and shrubs (apple, pear, raspberry, currant and blackcurrant) also flourish there.

The garden has evolved since it was created. Some plants have flourished, while others have been replaced. It is preceded by an antechamber where a mulberry tree is planted and which also houses a "high meadow", a grassy bench shaded by a vine trellis, where irises, acanthus and hollyhocks flower.

The Gonzague Saint-Bris Space

The garden was renamed in homage to Gonzague Saint Bris (1948-2017), a man of letters born in Loches and founder of "La forêt des livres" (The Forest of Books) in Chanceaux-près-Loches.

Themed tours are organised to help you discover all the richness of this unexpected 700 m² garden, especially during **Rendez-Vous at the Gardens**. Participate in workshops on eco-responsible cultivation techniques, or flower folding and repotting for the little ones!



Calendar



TEMPORARY EXHIBITION:

April - November

THE TRAVELLING KING

With the help of objects, facsimiles and documentary and iconographic material, this exhibition invites visitors to discover the meaning and implications of the itinerancy of the French court from the 12th century until the end of the Middle Ages.

June

Rendez-Vous at the Gardens

An invitation to discover the medieval garden, an oasis of greenery at the foot of the impressive thousand-year-old keep. Workshops and discoveries all day.

August

The Medieval Days of Loches

The Royal City of Loches comes alive with games and activities to help visitors rediscover the Middle Ages: camping, games, shows, a medieval market in the upper town during the 2nd weekend in August.

December

Christmas in the land of castles

The Winter Tales of the Royal City.

Through the programme "Christmas in the Land of Castles", the Royal City extends an invitation to revisit the folk tales that have shaped the contemporary imagination around Christmas. Throughout the month of December, visitors can (re)discover the characters of the tale in a conducive setting for the imagination (scenery and activities).

The Royal City organises workshops and special tours for all ages throughout the year.
Find all the details on www.citeroyaleloches.fr

Call +33 (0)2 47 19 18 08 for more information and to book
resaloches@departement-touraine.fr

Programming and Activities/ Visiting Experiences

Visit the Royal City of Loches

Discovering a castle should be a unique experience that you can enjoy as a family, with friends, in a group, or by yourself.

INDIVIDUALS

Self-guided

With map/guidebook available in 7 languages
Duration 2 hours

Multimedia guided tour

Immersive Augmented Reality Tour of the Keep with HistoPad© available in 7 languages
Recommended Duration: 1.5 hours
Included in the monument entrance fee.

Guided tour

Duration 1 hour (one monument) + 1.5 hours to discover the other monument on your own.
Seasonal hours of operation (please contact us)
Included in the ticket price.

Family visit

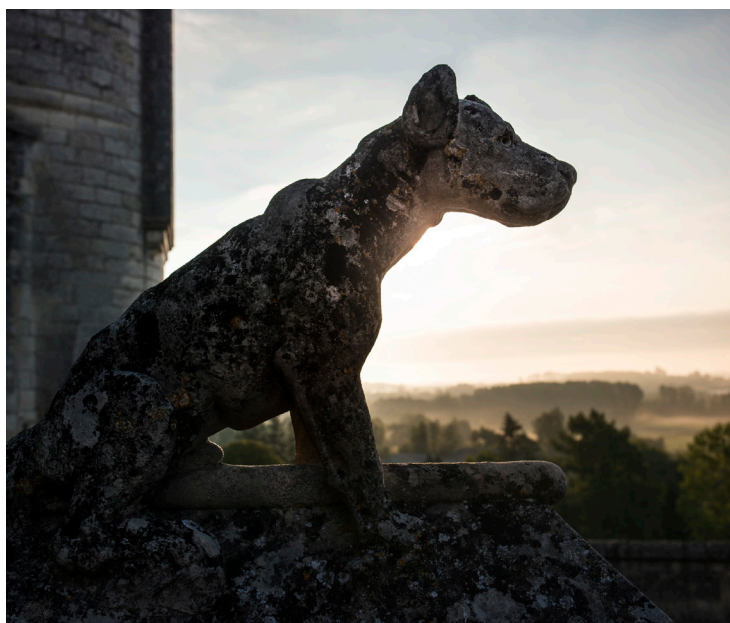
Special family fun visits during the school holidays and every weekend in May/June (children 3-12 years old) - By reservation.

SCHOOLS

Programme available for children from kindergarten through secondary school age, in coordination with teachers from the French national system: Guided tour, thematic tour, or workshop.

Fee from €1.5/student and up to €4/student for workshops.

See our **discovery** brochure for our range of educational and cultural programmes on <https://www.citeroyaleloches.fr/activites-pedagogiques>



GROUP RATES

15 people and more - (Visit can be personalized for fewer than 15 people at an additional cost. Please contact us.) **Booking required**

Self-guided

With map/guidebook available in 7 languages

Duration 2 hours

Immersive visit with Histopad

Immersive Augmented Reality Tour of the Keep with HistoPad available in 7 languages

Recommended Duration: 1.5 hours

Included in the monument entrance fee.

Guided tour - By half groups of 25 people

Duration 1.5 hours

Included in the monument entrance fee

Special Tour - Groups of 12 to 20 people

Let your imagination roam through privatized spaces!

Meet in the late afternoon (30 minutes before the site closes to the public), for a unique sensory and tasty visit.

Duration: 2 hours 15 minutes

Fee €28/ €30.

April, May, June, and September.

For more information, please contact us.

Schools

Programme available for children from kindergarten through secondary school age, in coordination with teachers from the French national system: Guided tour, thematic tour, or workshop.

Fee from €1.50/student and up to €4/student for workshops.

See our discovery brochure for our range of educational and cultural programmes on <https://www.citeroyaleloches.fr/activites-pedagogiques>

Services

Guided tour with

no extra charge

Capacity of up to 50 people (in half-groups of 25 people)

Free coach and bus parking

A 10-minute walk

Dining options

In the heart of the Royal City in season

and in the lower town all year round

Shops in the lower town.

“Bicycle Friendly” & “Loire à vélo” site

> Located less than 5 km from a bike route

> Facilities for cyclists: secure bike shelter, repair kit



Outdoor venue rental capacity: 500 people
From €900.
Please contact us for a quote.

Practical information

Open all year
(except 25 December and 1 January)
Days and Hours of Operation:
Jan., Feb., Dec.: 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
March, April, Sept., Oct.: 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
1 May-31 August: 09:30-19:00

Prices

Full: €10.50
Concessions: €8.50
Free driver and guide for 15 paying visitors
Ages 7-18: groups, clubs, organizations,
employee benefit schemes
Professional rate: €7.50
Thematic tour + €2.50
Special Tours: €28 / €30
School Groups: from €1.50 /student
Workshops: €4 to €9
Free for children under 7
Last ticket sold 30 minutes before closing.

E-ticketing for professionals

There is a platform to buy tickets in bulk
at professional rates.

> Log in to
www.citeroyaleloches.fr / Ticketing / Access
to my professional space.
Payment by credit card or bank transfer

Getting here



FROM TOURS

D943, towards Châteauroux -
40 minutes south of Tours

FROM PARIS

A10, exit 18, towards Amboise (D976)
then towards Loches (D31)

From Bordeaux

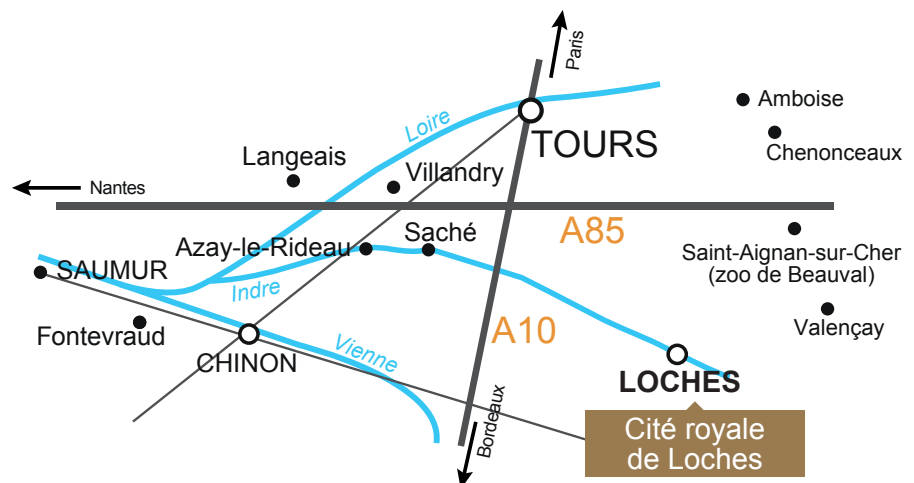
A10 exit 25 Ste-Maure-de-Touraine
then D760

Things to see nearby:

Chateau de Chenonceau - 30 minutes
Chateau Royal d'Amboise - 40 minutes
Beauval Zoo - 35 minutes
Museum of Prehistory of Grand
Pressigny - 35 minutes
Chateaux de Valençay, Montrésor,
Montpoupon, Bouges, Domaine
de Poulaines, and Lansyer Museum.

Prepare your stay

www.loches-valde Loire.com
www.touraineloirevalley.com



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Bookings



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Loches
Cité royale



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