TOUR MAP

Château de Châteaubriant

A DEPARTMENT HERITAGE SITE
Welcome to the Château de Châteaubriant!

A medieval fortress and Renaissance stately home wrapped up in one, this unique monument is home to ten centuries of history.

The Ramparts (Chemin de ronde)

Main entrance to the Château

Information
Tickets
Boutique

THE MEDIEVAL CASTLE

1. Porte des champs gate
2. Outer ward
3. Keep
4. Castellum
5. Great House – 3D Space on ground floor
6. The lodge
7. The Chapel
8. Tower of the Torche pond

THE RENAISSANCE CASTLE

9. Françoise de Dinan’s house
10. Jean de Laval’s house
11. Grand Staircase
12. Coat of Arms
13. Golden Chambee

Here in the Loire-Atlantique Département, we are working hard to make our heritage sites as accessible as possible. However, the nature and layout of the château make this challenging in places. Thank you for your understanding.
THE MEDIEVAL CASTLE

The first castle on this site, built by Brient I in around 1050, was a motte-and-bailey\(^1\) structure. Located on a rocky promontory overlooking the River Chère, this was a major stronghold in the Breton Marches region, the disputed border between Brittany and France. In the 13th century, the wooden tower at the centre of the original castle was replaced with a stone keep. New ramparts were erected, making this a truly formidable fortress defending the route into the Duchy of Brittany from the Kingdom of France. The buildings which now occupy the great courtyard were built and reconfigured by successive owners over the centuries.

1. Motte-and-bailey: a type of castle comprising a tower or small castle, generally made of wood, built atop a mound of earth.

THE “PORTE DES CHAMPS” GATE

As the main entrance to the castle, this gate is an impressive, imposing structure. Previously reinforced with two drawbridges - one for the pedestrian entrance, the other for the carriage entrance - and topped off with a machicolated corbel, it controlled access to the lower ward\(^2\). This enclosed space provided a refuge for local residents in the event of an attack. In times of peace, it was used for farming and housing the castle’s servants. The original Porte des Champs gate was probably constructed in the 14th century, before being reinforced and modernised in the 15th century with the addition of embrasures for cannons.

THE KEEP

The original wooden tower, built here in the 11th century, was replaced by a stone fortress with crenelated battlements in the 13th century. Thanks to regular construction work, the keep reached the towering height of 40 metres by the end of the 15th century. In the early 18th century, the top section fell down in a storm. As both a residence and a key defensive stronghold, the centrepiece of the castle sitting between the outer ward and the great courtyard, the keep was the final refuge of the defensive garrison in the event of an attack or siege. Nowadays visitors can explore the inside of the keep and enjoy the panoramic views by joining one of our guided tours (ask at the reception desk/boutique for more information).
THE CASTELLUM

Built in the 14th century, the castellum defends the entrance to the great courtyard. It is composed of two towers topped with imposing machicolated fortifications. The gate is protected by a drawbridge and a portcullis. The castellum was flanked by two more defensive towers, one on either side. The right-hand tower, now partially destroyed, is dotted with arrowslits which allowed the defending forces to return fire when under attack.

2-Machicolations: overhanging corbel on top of a medieval fortification, with holes allowing defenders to drop projectiles / 3- Portcullis: a sliding wooden grille used to close off the castle gates / 4-Arrowslit: Narrow slit in the wall of a castle, allowing archers to fire their bows on attackers.

THE GREAT HOUSE

Built in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, along with parts of the Lodge, the Great House originally had just two floors. In the late 15th century it was refurbished to create a more comfortable noble residence, with four floors and an extension to the right which ensured that each bedroom had its own separate wardrobe. We now have a better understanding of how the architecture of the house has evolved over the centuries, thanks to the archaeological surveys and restoration work conducted in 2015 and 2016. On the ground floor, a permanent 3D installation, available in English, retraces the evolution of the castle from the 11th century down to the present day. Visitors can explore the upper storeys of the Great House by joining one of our guided tours (ask at the reception desk/boutique for more information).
LIKE THE GREAT HOUSE, THE LODGE WAS BUILT IN THE LATE 14TH AND EARLY 15TH CENTURIES. IT WAS EXPANDED IN THE LATE 15TH CENTURY AND REFURBISHED IN THE 16TH CENTURY IN A STYLE MORE IN KEEPING WITH CONTEMPORARY TASTES. THE MID-16TH CENTURY WOODEN ROOF IS AN ORIGINAL FEATURE. UNLIKE A TRADITIONAL ROOF, ITS BEAMS ARE CURVED. THIS RARE STYLE IS KNOWN AS AN “IMPERIAL” ROOF.

THE CHAPEL


TOWER OF THE TORCHE POND

IN MARCH 1487, SIXTY BRETON LORDS, INCLUDING FRANÇOISE DE DINAN (1436-1500), OWNER OF THE CASTLE, ROSE UP IN REBELLION AGAINST THE DUKE OF BRITTANY FRANCIS II (1458-1488) IN AN ATTEMPT TO WEEKEN HIM POLITICALLY. CHARLES VIII (1483-1498) TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THESE DISSENSIONS TO TRY TO ANNEX BRITTANY. 12,000 FRENCH SOLDIERS, COMING FROM POUANCÉ, WERE SENT TO CHÂTEAUBRIANT AND THEN LAID SIEGE TO THE CHÂTEAU IN APRIL 1488. THE POWER OF THE FRENCH ARTILLERY ALLOWED IT TO CREATE A BREACH AT THE LEVEL OF THE TOUR DE LA TORCHE, THEREBY ALLOWING IT TO TAKE THE CASTLE AND THE TOWN.
THE RENAISSANCE CASTEL

After the siege of 1488, the French army destroyed most of the castle’s fortifications. Anne of Brittany, having become Queen of France (1491-1514) granted the sum of 100,000 Ecus to Françoise de Dinan to fund the reconstruction of her château. Françoise de Dinan thus embarked upon an ambitious programme of architectural work. Improvements were made to the medieval castle, and work began on a “new château” in what used to be the great courtyard. Françoise de Dinan’s son, and then her grandson Jean de Laval (1503-1543), used this spacious courtyard to create noble residences in the Renaissance style, with long galleries opening out onto the gardens, designed for leisurely promenades and contemplation.

FRANÇOISE DE DINAN’S HOUSE

The new house, commissioned by Françoise de Dinan and continued by her son and grandson, was built between 1493 and 1520. It embodies the architectural transition between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance era. On the first floor, the house contains a vast reception room adorned with huge windows cut into the façade and sculpted tufa limestone features in the early Renaissance style. Known as the “Green Room,” or else the “National Guards’ Room” on account of its more recent occupants, the space is now used to house temporary exhibitions.
In the 1530s, Jean de Laval expanded the Great House with a new extension which now bears his name. The façade of this new house - punctuated by schist niches and tufa pilasters crowned with capitals in the classical style - reflects the changing architectural tastes of the day.

Two long, ornamental galleries, built in a combination of schist and brick, flanked the courtyard and gardens. One of these galleries has since disappeared, but a few of its arches are still visible.

After the death of Jean de Laval in 1543, the Duke and Grand Constable of France Anne de Montmorency (1493-1567) inherited the château. The coat of arms of the Montmorency family can be seen on the pediment above one of the dormers on the Renaissance château, on the right-hand side.

5-Pilaster: a vertical feature protruding slightly from a wall, generally including a base and capital / 6 - Capital: a flared structure placed atop a column, pillar or pilaster
In 1853 the last private owner of the château, Henri d’Orléans (1822-1897), Duc d’Aumale and a member of the Bourbon-Condé dynasty, sold it to the Département de Loire-Inférieure (the precursor of today’s Loire-Atlantique département). The estate was initially transformed into a local government office. Since 2001, the département has been working to promote and showcase this exceptional heritage site.

### THE “GOLDEN CHAMBER”

Some time around 1516, Françoise de Foix (1494-1537), wife of Jean de Laval, became the mistress of the King François I of France (1494-1547). In around 1526, having been abandoned by the king and shunned at Court, she returned to Châteaubriant. She died suddenly on the night of 16th October 1537, giving rise to an enduring legend. The story goes that her husband, jealous of her affair with the king, had her killed in her bedroom - the Golden Chamber - leaving a great pool of blood on the floor. Legend has it that each year, on the anniversary of her death, the ghost of Françoise de Foix appears in her bedroom, followed by the ghosts of King François I and her husband Jean de Laval. Visitors are free to explore the Golden Chamber. The room now houses the epitaph of Françoise de Foix and a multimedia installation devoted to the history and legend of this illustrious former resident, as well as the work done to restore the Golden Chamber in the 1990s.

### THE SUCCESSIVE OWNERS OF CHÂTEAU DE CHÂTEAUBRIANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Owner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early 11th century</td>
<td>Châteaubriant Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>1383 – 1499</td>
<td>Dinan-Montafilant Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1499 – 1543</td>
<td>Laval Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1543 – 1632</td>
<td>Montmorency Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1632 – 1792</td>
<td>Bourbon-Condé Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845 – 1853</td>
<td>Henri d’Orléans, Duke of Aumale</td>
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<tr>
<td>1853 to today</td>
<td>Département of Loire-Atlantique</td>
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Owner of the Château de Châteaubriant since 1853, the Château de Clisson (1962), the Domaine de la Garenne Lemot (1968) and the Eglise du Vieux-bourg in Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes (1979), the Loire-Atlantique Département recently acquired the gardens of Les Folies Siffait (2007) and the Abbaye de Blanche Couronne (2020), and continues to pursue an ambitious policy of heritage conservation.
OPENING HOURS - GARDENS


- Every day / 9:00-18:00
- Every day / 9:00-19:30

The gardens may be closed in the event of an orange or red-level weather warning.

OPENING HOURS - VISITOR CENTRE AND SHOP


- Closed
- Tuesday to Sunday / 14:00-17:30
- Tuesday to Sunday / 10:30-13:00 & 14:00-18:00

Closed: 1st and 11th November, 24th, 25th and 31st December.

For more information: chateau-chateaubriant.fr