

The medieval kitchen garden

The art of growing

During the Middle Ages, garden plants were divided into “roots”, “herbs” and “seeds”, depending on whether their underground parts (roots, rhizome), aerial parts (stems, leaves) or seeds (such as peas) were used. The castle’s estate includes a medieval-inspired kitchen garden, encircled by water thanks to the Bièvre river and its reach*. The garden is made up of regular square-shaped and rectangular plots. The plants are grown on raised beds consolidated with planks or woven chestnut trellises known in French as “plessis”.

Herbal power

From the Middle Ages onwards, medicinal herbs, known as ‘simples’, were grown in town gardens, meeting the need to benefit from Nature’s bountiful remedies. Monks classified their medicinal simples in a special way, although it wasn’t until the 18th century that the general naming of plants (nomenclature) in Latin was created, which we still use today. Aromatic, spice and medicinal plants are all grown in the castle’s garden, alongside vegetables, fruit trees and flowers, especially roses – the flower of beauty and love rituals. Plants with colouring properties were used to make the coloured inks required for copying out manuscripts and for dyeing fabrics.

* Explanations overleaf.

Glossary

Console: overhanging projecting stone supporting arches at their springing line.

Cruet: small recipient containing wine and water for the mass.

Machicolation: a stone overhanging gallery with openings in the floor through which missiles could be shot downwards.

Pediment: triangular or semi-arched architectural ornament above an entrance, door or window, consisting of a tympanum surrounded by a moulded frame.

Postern: concealed door made in the least exposed part of a fortification.

Reach: section of a waterway between two falls or a subsidiary canal.

Practical information

Visit takes on average: 1 hour.

The Centre des monuments nationaux publishes a collection of guidebooks about French monuments, translated into several languages. Éditions du patrimoine publications are on sale in the bookshop-giftshop.

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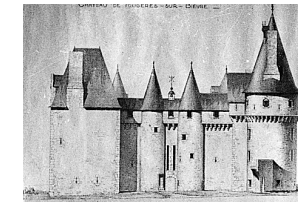
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Fougères Castle

A 15th-century fortified castle

A reminder of Medieval times

In 1030, the seigniory of Fougères belonged to a vassal of the Count of Blois. During the



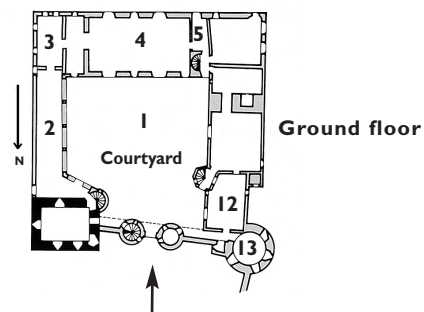
Hundred Years’ War, the castle fell into the hands of the English who, once defeated, abandoned it in ruins in 1429.

In 1470, Pierre de Refuge, advisor to Prince Charles of Orleans and treasurer to King Louis XI, turned the castle into a fortress.

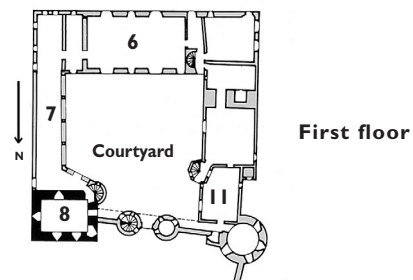
A Renaissance makeover

Around 1510-1520, Jean de Villebresme, Pierre de Refuge’s grandson, carried out alteration work on the castle, adding Renaissance-style features. Over the following centuries the building lost a little of its military appearance: openings were enlarged, moats filled in and the drawbridge removed. In 1789 it was acquired by René Lambot, owner of the neighbouring Château de Boissay, who set up a spinning mill there from 1812 to 1901. The building was listed as a historic monument in 1912, and became State property in 1932.

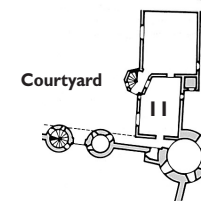
It provides a picture of a small fortified medieval castle, differing from the grand Loire châteaux in its lack of ostentation despite the embellishments added during the Renaissance.



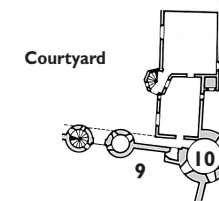
Ground floor



First floor



Second floor



Third floor

A Blois fortress

The castle's military layout and late 15th-century internal layout have been preserved. Sober and powerful in its architecture, it is a perfect illustration of the building techniques used in the region, as much in the choice of materials as in the way they are used. The walls are made of hard calcareous Beauce ragstone, while a softer white stone, *tuffeau* or freestone, from the banks of the Cher, has been used for the moulded and sculpted parts.

Front courtyard

Above the main entrance gate, there are still the vertical grooves into which the shafts of the drawbridge fitted.

Ground floor

- 1 **The main courtyard:** opposite and right of the entrance are two residential buildings which are the oldest parts, build circa 1450-1475. The two doors at the back of the south residential building are surmounted by carved pediments*: on the right, two soldiers, on the left, angels bearing blazons and an effigy of St Michael fighting the dragon.
- 2 **The open gallery,** with lowered arcades, is fairly similar to Louis XII's in Blois Castle.

- 3 **The chapel** has a small "foot-warmer" type fireplace and, in the chancel, a niche for storing cruets*. The ribbed vault was destroyed in 1812, when a paddle wheel was installed for the spinning mill. The consoles* from which the ribs of the vaulting sprang are carved with angels bearing blazons.
- 4 **The guardroom** is unusual in that it has direct access to the courtyard. A loophole made in the wall of the adjoining staircase made it possible to monitor access to the first floor.
- 5 **The corridor** leads to the garden through a door over which is a groove, indicating that a small single-shafted drawbridge once stood there.

First floor

- 6 From the **main room** there is a delightful view over the rooftops, all at different heights, on the courtyard side.
- 7 The timbers of the **upper gallery,** above the arcade gallery and the chapel, are shaped like an upturned boat. In the corner is a watchtower, a small corbelled-out turret used for surveying the surrounding area.

The defensive wing of the entrance

- 8 The rectangular **keep,** built during the last quarter of the 15th century, is served by an out-built staircase in a corner tower.

The rooms on each floor open outwards through two recessed windows with window seats.

- 9 **The wall-walk,** which is reached via a staircase in a postern* tower, is fitted with machicolations*.

The west residential building, from top to bottom

- 10 **The corner tower** originally had a roof terrace, as proved by the slightly sloping paving and, at the lowest point, a rainwater drain on the wall-walk. The conical roof was added after construction to form a sentry post with a timber and cob wall.
- 11 **The small apartments** on the second and first floors are arranged in a way characteristic of Gothic period dwellings: a room with window seat and fireplace, an antechamber, a private room in the tower and latrines.
- 12 **The former kitchens** had two very high windows to draw out smoke, and a fireplace with a timber lintel.
- 13 **The former defence post,** on the ground floor, has arrow and cannon slits allowing weapons to be fired in all directions.

* Explanations overleaf.