

## The early Renaissance in the Périgord

### Persistence of Gothic influences

A first building campaign lasted from 1514 to 1524, one result of which was the round tower topped with machicolations\*. The buildings have aligned windows at irregular intervals along the facade. The spiral staircase is in an out-built\* polygonal tower. These volumes, which remain in the Medieval tradition, have low-relief rinceau decorations and letter friezes, the meaning of which is obscure. There are other patterns expressing the favour of the sovereigns, such as the royal lily and the Savoy knot, associated with the widowhood of Louise of Savoy.

### Loire Valley styles

A little later, from 1525 to 1535, features used on the banks of the Loire appeared: the capping of the large tower and main building, and the skylights topped with pediments. The elaborately decorated chimney stacks are reminiscent of Chambord. There are more sculpted decorations on these upper parts and on the grand staircase pavilion.

Similarities with Bonnavet Castle\*, where work stopped in 1525, suggest that some of the artists may have come to work at Puyguilhem, bringing their know-how and its Italian influences, already visible in nearby Quercy at Assier and Montal Castles, which were being built at that time.

### Glossary

**Bonnavet:** castle belonging to Guillaume Gouffier, favourite of François I, built in the Poitou between 1516 and 1525 but no longer standing.

**Hercules:** the Roman name of the Greek hero, Heracles, embodying strength. He was forced to complete twelve labours to atone for the murder of his wife and children; the first of these was to choke the lion of Nemea.

**Machicolation:** a stone gallery overhanging a wall enabling missiles to be dropped vertically.

**Out-built:** built against another building.

**Parliament:** a provincial court of law under the monarchy. The oldest and most important parliament was the Paris parliament.

**Putlog holes:** recesses for pigeons and doves.

### Practical information

Average length of visit: 1 hour.

Guided tours in French.

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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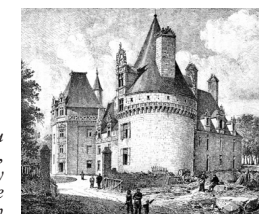
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# Puyguilhem Château

An early Renaissance creation

### Construction

Mondot de La Marthonie, president of the Guyenne parliament\* in Bordeaux, bought the title of Puyguilhem c.1510. This noble from the Perigord, legal advisor to Louise of Savoy (mother of the future King François I), became the first president of the Paris parliament in 1515. He gained even greater influence at the court when François I (1515-1547) left to wage war in Italy. It was at that time that Mondot



*The château in 1880, engraving by Baron de Verneilh*

began work on his château, marking his rise in society. After his death in 1517, his project was continued by his brother Gaston, until c. 1535.

The château remained in his family until the 18th century, when the Chapt de Rastignacs inherited it. There were several successive owners in the early 20th century, but the building virtually fell into ruin.

### Restoration

The château was listed as a historic monument in 1912 and bought by the State in 1939. Restoration work was carried out under Yves-Marie Froidevaux, historic monuments architect, for some twenty years.

\* Explanations overleaf.

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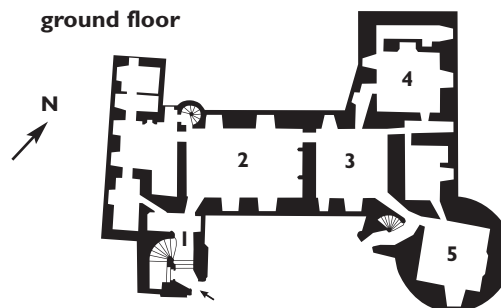
The château comprises two parts, set at right angles and served by two polygonal staircase towers. A large fortified tower which still has a Mediaeval look stands alongside the main section, to which it is connected by one of the polygonal towers.

In the 16th century, the château probably stood around a courtyard closed off by service buildings which no longer exist. In addition to the ground floor and upper storey, the building also has an attic floor beneath the high roofs, with enormous skylight windows. On the facade, the mullioned windows are aligned vertically; their layout is dictated by interior considerations.

Beneath the roof of the grand staircase, forming a canopy, there is a sculpted balustrade below two richly decorated skylights. On the large tower, a long line of decorative machicolations\* recall the original defensive purposes of this type of architecture.

## Ground floor

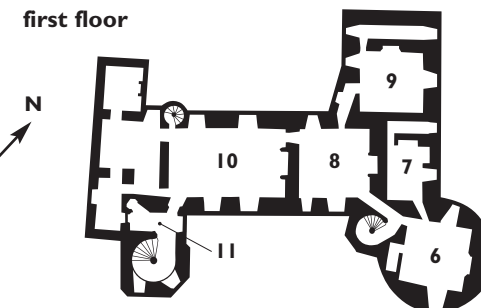
- 1 The grand staircase** is broad and comfortable. It opens onto a wide vestibule, with sumptuous ribbed vaulting, embellishing the access to the rooms.
- 2 The great hall** features two late-sixteenth-century Flemish tapestries, one depicting a fight between a lion and a leopard, the other a rhinoceros based on an engraving by Albrecht Dürer.
- 3 The dining hall** still has its sixteenth-century wash basin recessed into the wall near the window.
- 4 The kitchen** has a deep fireplace to allow room for cooking equipment.
- 5 The weapons room.** The fireplace, with a sculpted decoration of three miniatures depicting helmeted warriors above a rinceau frieze, is typical of the early Renaissance.



The paving stones are very common in the Perigord. The interior plan and layout of the rooms are identical on all floors.

## First floor

- 6 The châtelaine's room** is in the large round tower.
- 7 A dressing room** with a fireplace completes these apartments.
- 8 The lord's room:** the Aubusson tapestry, completed in the 18th century from cartoons by Jean-Baptiste Huet, depicts a pastoral scene.
- 9 An adjoining room** is linked to the bedroom via a corridor built into the thickness of the wall. It opens onto the storage space which also forms part of this section of the building.
- 10 The great hall** is 7 metres wide and 11 metres long. The door of the lord's room is designated by a frame with flat mouldings forming an entablature at the top. The exceptionally wide fireplace has superb sculpted decoration: six recesses with bas-reliefs depicting the labours of Hercules\*. The only original scene, Hercules and the lion of Nemea, is on the right. The missing parts have been restored using a different model to mark a clear difference.
- 11 The vestibule,** above the one on the ground floor, has a coffered ceiling.



The decorations and dimensions of the first-floor living quarters illustrate the new social rank of the La Marthonie family.

**On the second floor,** the sixteenth-century oak frame has remained intact with all its component parts.

## The estate

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the large pond in the valley was drained, which changed the aspect of the area surrounding the château. The elegant boxtree maze was designed in 1950s. It is evocative of Italian Renaissance garden art. At the bottom of the wide lime tree avenue, there is a dovecote with 250 putlog holes\*, evidence of the wealth of the lord of the manor.

\* Explanations overleaf.