

## The Apocalypse tapestry

### An outstanding commission

The tapestry is still an exceptionally large piece of cloth work, measuring about 100 metres long and 4.50 metres high. It was commissioned in 1375 by Louis I, Duke of Anjou and brother of King Charles V, and was probably completed in 1382. Though it has deteriorated over time, most of it has survived.

### A reinterpretation

The way the scenes are treated in this illustration of the Apocalypse according to Saint John (the text dates from the 1st century AD) shows the influence of the political context when it was being made. This was the time of the Hundred Years War, a series of conflicts between France and England that lasted from 1337 to 1453. The tapestry offers a realistic representation of the ravages of war with raids, plague and famine.

### An expensive work

It took 7 years to make the tapestry – which is quick for such a large work. It is made entirely of wool and comprises six pieces, each starting with a major figure followed by two registers of seven scenes.

The official court painter, Jean de Bruges, created the cartoons, the models that are made prior to the actual weaving. Probably drawing his inspiration from illuminations in manuscripts about the Apocalypse, he composed a series of scenes which are easy to read, with monumental figures placed against single-colour or floral backgrounds.

## Glossary

**Angevin vaulting:** a highly curved Gothic vault (with intersecting ribs).

**Fall trap:** a hole cut in the vault through which projectiles could be dropped on assailants.

**Levelling:** flattening of a surface to remove all elements in relief.

**Loopholes, gun-loops:** openings made in a wall for firing weapons, a vertical slit for arrows and a round hole for cannons.

**Neolithic:** the most recent prehistoric period, from 4000 to 2500 BC in Europe.

**Pepperbox turret:** a conical roof.

**Portcullis:** vertically sliding grid which is used to obstruct the gateway to a town or stronghold.

**Regent:** Queen Blanche of Castile governed during the childhood of her son, the future King Louis IX, from 1226 to 1234.

## Practical information

Average length of visit: 1 hour

Go-as-you please tours, guided tours, themed tours. Audio guides available in French, English, German, Italian and Spanish. Children's version available. Tours suitable for disabled visitors.



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Centre des monuments nationaux  
 Château d'Angers  
 Promenade du Bout-du-Monde  
 49100 Angers  
 tél. 02 41 86 48 77  
 fax 02 41 87 17 50  
 chateau-angers@monuments-nationaux.fr

[www.monuments-nationaux.fr](http://www.monuments-nationaux.fr)



# Angers Chateau

A royal fortress

## A fortress and sumptuous residence

The site, a rocky promontory overlooking the river Maine, has been occupied by man since the Neolithic\* period.

In the 9th century the threat from the Normans led the Count of Anjou to set up a lookout post. The Anjou Plantagenet dynasty succeeded him three centuries later, reigning from the Pyrenees to Scotland.

In the 13th century, the regent\* Blanche of Castile had the fortress built as a place to mass royal troops.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Dukes of Anjou Louis I, Louis II and King René, enlightened princes and art lovers, developed a dazzling court life at the chateau. The many periods they spent in Naples influenced both their lifestyle and their conception of architecture.

## A military enclosure and prison



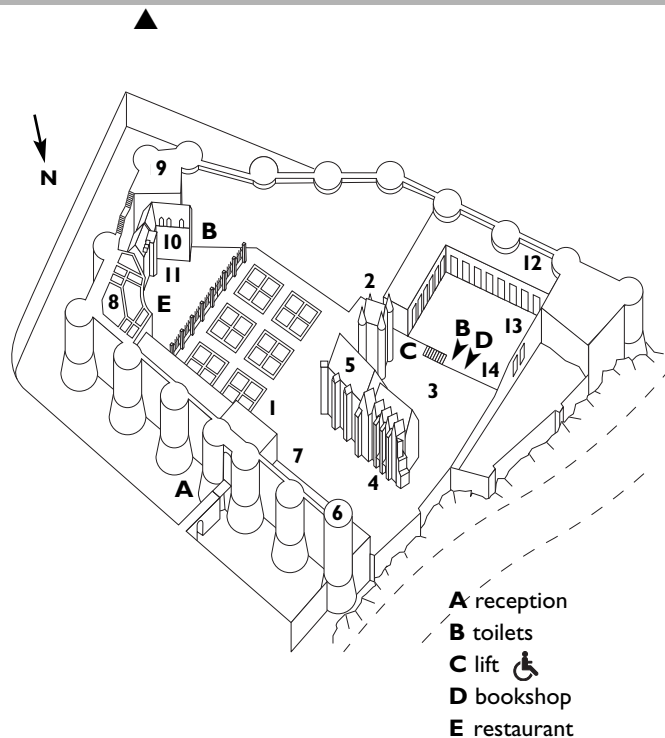
16th-century engraving

At the end of the 16th century, at the height of the Wars of Religion, on the orders of King Henri III (1574-1589)\*\* the governor

of the fortress, Donadieu de Puycharic, had the roofs of the towers and the ramparts levelled. As such, the fortress was equipped with advances in artillery. It subsequently became a simple security enclosure and was frequently used as a prison.

\* Explanations overleaf.

\*\* Dates of beginning and end of reign.



## Two intertwined architectures

From the outside, the chateau impresses with its imposing mass of towers and surrounding walls, which are nearly one kilometre long. This citadel of royal power is flanked by 17 towers built of dark schist (or slate) and pale limestone. These towers are around thirty metres high, with three or four rows of loopholes\*, some of which were replaced at the end of the 16th century by gun-loops\*. Each gate of the chateau was defended by a double portcullis\* with a fall trap\* above it.

**I Near the reference map** inside the fortress there are views of the entire gardens and elegant buildings laid out on over 25,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

## The seigniorial residence

In the 14th and 15th centuries a set of buildings laid out around a courtyard acted as a private and administrative area and was separated from the rest of the fortress.

- 2 The 15th-century fortified gateway**, with its picturesque corner turrets adorned with pepperbox turrets\*, is the entrance porch to the seigniorial residence, and separates them from the other, semi-public areas of the chateau.
- 3 The seigniorial court** is bounded by a corner of the fortress and the various buildings that were built by the Counts of Anjou between the 9th and 15th centuries.
- 4 The royal residence** was rebuilt in the 14th century by Louis II. King René added a gallery around 1450. The building is being restored after a fire ravaged the upper parts in January 2009.
- 5 The single-nave chapel**, built around 1410 by Yolanda of Aragon, the wife of Louis II, is distinctive for its ample proportions and Angevin vaulting\*.

## The enclosure

- 6 The mill tower** once had a windmill on top. It is 40 metres high and provides a unique panorama over the town, chateau and river Maine.
- 7 The parapet walk** on the ramparts was redeveloped at the end of the 14th century after the levelling\* of the towers, which stood ten or so metres higher and were crowned by slate pepperbox turrets\*. An earth rampart inside the walls of the enclosure formed artillery terraces.

**8 The plantations:** vines are grown the traditional way using slate stakes. The hanging garden is planted with species that were known in the Middle Ages, and include medicinal plants, aromatic herbs and flowers reproduced on the Apocalypse tapestry.

**9 The field gateway**, originally the main entrance to the chateau, is composed of two broad towers with a portcullis\* system to close it and with fall traps\*.

**10 The models:** four models on display in the rooms inside the gateway show how the site and chateau changed over time. Hanging from the vaulting are contemporary art works by Sarkis – 1/5 scale models of each room with their openings.

**11 The governor's lodging** dates from the 18th century and incorporates an older element, a 15th-century slate stair turret.

## 12 The gallery of the Apocalypse

This corner building was built in 1954 on the site of former buildings to house and preserve the Apocalypse tapestry, a vast piece of work. The gallery was redeveloped in 1996.

*See tapestry commentary overleaf.*

**13** One wall of the great hall of **the Count's palace** still stands. It was built by the Counts of Anjou from the 9th to the 12th centuries.

**14 Archaeological remains.** The oldest remains of occupation of the site are a cairn, a monumental burial ground from the Neolithic\* period, which is 15 metres in diameter and has a corridor and five rooms. To the rear, there are two rooms from the Roman period: the one on the left has a chimney and waste water drainage, and inside the walls of the room on the right are pipes for heating the upper room.