TOUR MAP

Château de Clisson

A DEPARTMENT HERITAGE SITE
Welcome to château de Clisson!

Long an impregnable fortress, the château de Clisson is a model fortified castle.

The Loire-Atlantique Department strives to make its heritage sites as accessible as possible. However, the very nature of a fortified castle and its configuration complicate this desire. Thank you.

THE ORIGINAL CASTLE
1. Ditch and the Saint-Louis Tower
2. Gatehouse
3. Manorial courtyard
4. Northern living quarters
5. Square Tower
6. Southern living quarters
7. Keep or master tower
8. Eastern living quarters
9. Later Châtelet (small castle)

10. Bastion of the Elms
11. Gun Towers
12. Demi-Lune Bastion

MODERN EXTENSIONS

P Car Park
 взгляд
A château on the Breton Marshlands, the château de Clisson was built on the orders of Geoffrey Martel in the years 1058-1060. Geoffrey Martel (1006-1060) was tireless in conquering many western territories before becoming Count of Anjou upon the death of his father (Fulk III, also known as «Fulk the Black»).

**Château de Clisson**

Built on a naturally strategic site at the confluence of the Sèvre Nantaise and Moine rivers, the château de Clisson helped to control a complex territory situated between Brittany, Anjou and Poitou.

Initially a wooden castle high on a rocky outcrop, it quickly became an impregnable fortress in which the Clisson family would take up residence beginning in the second half of the eleventh century.
THE ORIGINAL CASTLE

1. DITCH AND THE SAINT-LOUIS TOWER

This modern walkway allows for ease of access to the original castle. In the medieval period, this area was totally closed off. There were no bridges or gates in this section. The ditches were the castle's first line of defence, slowing down the enemy. In the 13th century, a tower with arrowslits (known as the Saint-Louis tower) was built on the rock in order to reinforce the town's defences.

2. GATEHOUSE

This tower, which served both residential and defensive purposes, was built in the 13th century and modified in the early 14th century. The archway has many elements designed to deter the enemy: arrowslits, murder-holes, portcullis and gate. The top of this gatehouse is also crowned with a series of machicolations. Composed of two semicircular towers, this massive building housed living spaces as evidenced by different doors, windows and chimneys.

3. MANORIAL COURTYARD

This symbolises the place of power. It is here that lords of Clisson and their family probably lived in the eleventh century. At the centre, the cistern provided a water supply to the inhabitants of the castle. Around this courtyard, the different living quarters were built between the 12th and 15th century.

4. NORTHERN LIVING QUARTERS AND SQUARE TOWER

These abut the first stone curtain, built in the twelfth century. To illuminate this dwelling, small Romanesque windows were cut into the walls. It is also connected to the first stone tower of the castle or first keep. This square, residential tower contains a spiral staircase leading down to the river bank.

1. Opening provided on top of a gate from which projectiles were thrown down at the attackers.
2. Stone gallery equipped up with walls and breakthrough openings. From these openings soldiers would throw projectiles at the enemy.
3. Defensive wall connecting two towers.
This great princely type of dwelling was built in the late 14th century according to the wishes of Olivier V de Clisson (1336-1407). This great Breton lord, upon becoming Constable of France in 1380, wished to symbolise in stone his social advancement and his power. This translated into large wall openings, a ceremonial room, fireplaces on each floor, the construction of a water closet and the creation of kitchens at the back the fireplace in the great hall. To learn more about Olivier V, go inside the Saint-Louis Tower. A 6-minute video traces the history of this great lord.

Like the North Wing, the South Wing was built alongside a 12th-century curtain wall. Having been greatly re-worked, it has since lost its medieval appearance. Consequently, you can see elements from the modern era such as a sink, a «potager» or «stew-hole» (a little kitchen-hearth area for heating up cooking pots) etc.

Built in the mid-thirteenth century to the 14th century to increase the defence on the southern front, keep consists of two towers and rises up six levels. The ground floor and first floor were used by the soldiers.

In the centre, the noble family had three floors of residential rooms. Finally, the sixth level also served as a military site where soldiers could keep the watch. This keep symbolises the power of the lord over the territory.

Leaving behind the noble courtyard, and after traversing the defensive passage of the gate lodge, you come across a double gate. The larger entrance was used by mounted riders. The small entrance was for pedestrians. This passage connects to the forward gate tower. This gate, built at the beginning the thirteenth century, was the entrance gate to the castle at that time.

It consists of two towers and a defensive passway with bridge, arrowslit, murder-holes, portcullis, and gate. In the 14th century, one-storey and one section of the living quarters abutting the right of the passageway were built to create residential spaces.

4. Side opposite to the primary side.
At the end of the fifteenth century, the Francis II, Duke of Brittany, became owner of the castle. He decided to adapt the castle for guns, since in the fifteenth century firearms were being increasingly used in siege wars. After ordering the extension of the northern curtain and the raising of a monumental gate, he built a bastion dedicated to firearms. Two shooting levels thus made it possible to accommodate guns of different calibre. An arrow drawbridge protected the entrance of the bastion.

**Francis II** (1435-1488)

**Duke of Brittany from 1458 to 1488.**

In conflict with the King of France, he sought to preserve the independence of the Duchy of Brittany. This Franco-Breton war ended at the Battle of Saint-Aubindu-Cormier on 28 July 1488. Two months after the defeat of the Breton army, Francis II died. The Duchy passed into the hands of his daughter, Anne of Brittany. It would nevertheless not be until 1532 that Brittany would become part of France.
In the very troubled context of the Franco-Breton war that pitted Francis II against the King of France from 1465 to 1488, two gun towers were built. They consisted of casemates in the basement and of living quarters in storeys. The casemates were the lower rooms where the guns were used. The living quarters, meanwhile, were where the captains lived. Finally, these artillery towers were made of pierced parapets with machicolations and gun ports. Hence, three new levels of fire protected this side of the castle.

Francis II’s descendants gradually transformed the castle into a more comfortable residence. At the end of the sixteenth century, however, they decided to fortify it again to confront the Protestants during the religious wars. A bastion in the shape of a demi-lune was built to protect the southern front with firearms (guns, etc.).
François-Frédéric Lemot (1771-1827)
If his name is little known today, it is nevertheless found among his official commissions: the decoration of the tribune of the National Assembly, the statue of Henri IV on the Pont Neuf in Paris or that of Louis XIV at the Place Bellecour in Lyon. Not only did François-Frédéric Lemot own the Château de Clisson, he also created the Domaine de la Garenne Lemot (half a mile from the castle on the other bank of the Sèvre). In this thirteen-hectare park, he built a Tuscan-style house and a neoclassical villa. The park is free to visit all year round.

THE OWNERS OF THE CHÂTEAU DE CLISSON THROUGH THE AGES

| Mid XIth century → 1420 | The de Clisson Family |
| 1420 → 1481 | The de Montfort Family |
| 1481 → 1746 | The d’Avaugour Family |
| 1746 → 1792 | The de Rohan Family |
| 1807 → 1962 | The Lemot Family |
| 1962 to present | Loire-Atlantique Department |

From the late seventeenth century, its owners gradually abandoned the castle. In 1793 it was burned by the Republicans during the War in the Vendée. Partially destroyed and overgrown, the castle became a source of inspiration for sculptor François-Frédéric Lemot, who purchased it in 1807. The artist then transformed the old fortress into a romantic ruin where the plant world lived free amongst the man-made walls. To learn more about François-Frédéric Lemot, go inside the South-West Tower. There, a video tells the story of this artist’s passion for the Middle Ages.
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.