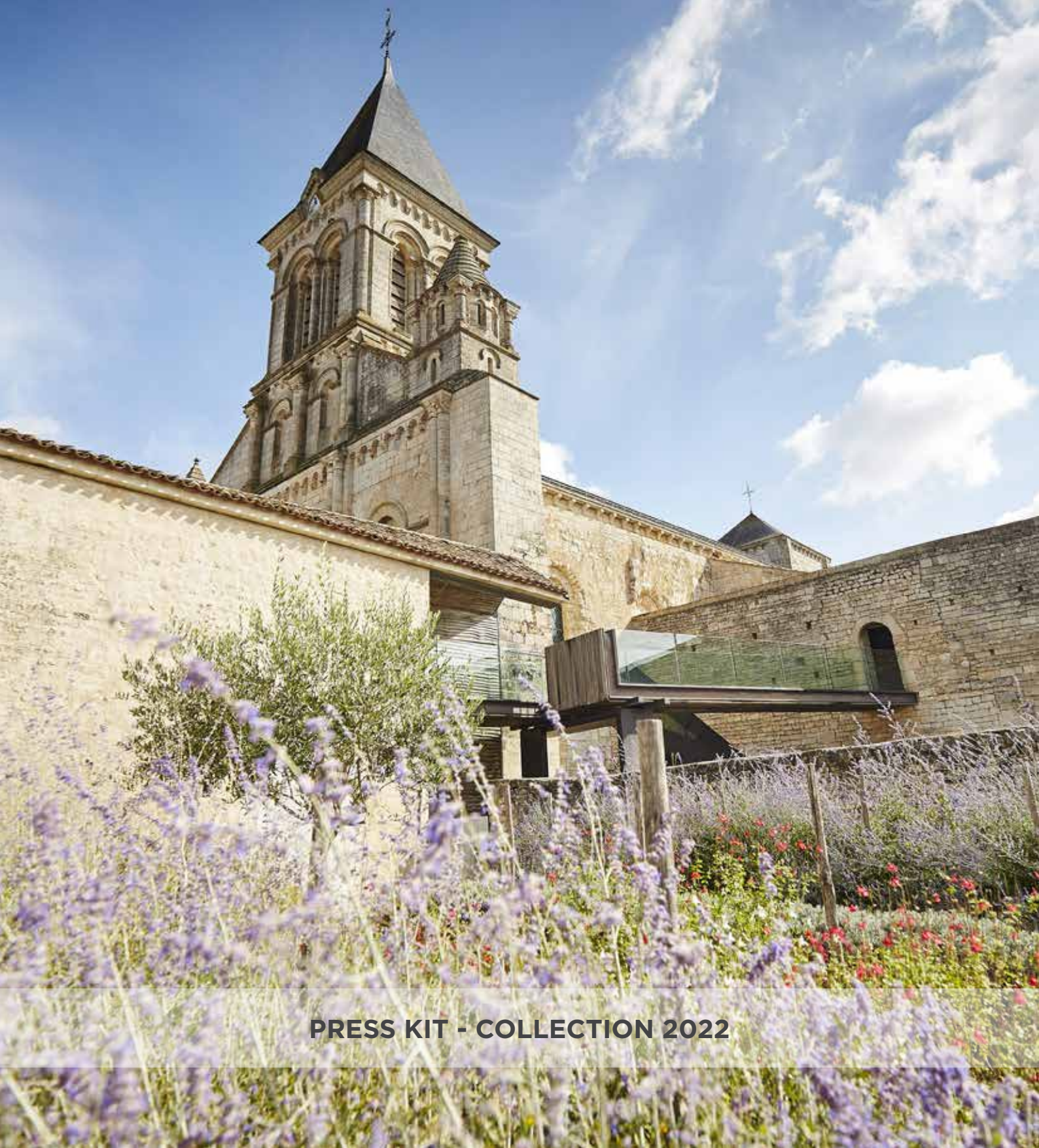


THE VENDÉE

CULTURE AND HERITAGE 2022



PRESS KIT - COLLECTION 2022

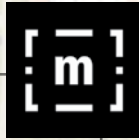
KEY FIGURES

THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE VENDEE

The Vendée has a great diversity of “heritage /cultural” sites throughout the region, some of which have received special awards:

14

Museums of France



1

Town labelled
Art and History town

Fontenay
le Comte



Grand Site de France :

LE MARAIS
POITEVIN



4

Remarkable
Gardens labelled



366

monuments listed as
Historic Monuments

4

Maisons
des
Illustres



(mark of quality
– its purpose
is to preserve
the memory of
distinguished people
- political, social and
cultural history)

AND MORE

16 sites listed in Michelin Green Guide :

10 1-star “Interesting” sites,

4 2-star “Worth a Visit” sites ,

2 3-star “Worth a trip” sites

7.9/10

for « The Perception of heritage/culture” in the Vendée”: the feedback from visitors is very encouraging; they highly rated the richness/diversity, the dates and opening times, as well as the way in which the site is promoted.

48%

of those surveyed said that they came to the Vendée on a regular basis (i.e. at least once every two years). Nevertheless, out of the 52% who did not come regularly, more than half were coming to the region for the first time (53%).

39%

of those interviewed want to be educated/informed and this was by far the most important reason for visiting, followed by seeking an experience (19%), sharing this knowledge with children (14%) and the range of activities/events on offer.

86%

of respondents indicated that they had or would visit at least one site related to the “heritage/culture” theme in the Vendée during their holiday or trip.



Source : Survey carried out in 2019 by the Territorial and Tourist Observation Department of Vendée Expansion. This customer study concerning the Vendée's historical and cultural heritage is based on a survey of tourists and day-trippers from April to September 2019, involving 2,414 people.

Learn more : <https://www.vendee-expansion.fr/publications/documents/etudes-thematiques/etude-patrimoine-historique-et-culturel-en-vendee-2020.pdf>

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The Vendée, a rich history

The Vendée is a region where history is old, very old. From the prehistoric époque to modern times, it has been marked by many significant events of French history, and also by internationally renowned historical figures.

SOME OF THE VENDEE'S HISTORICAL FIGURES...



ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE

1122 (or 1124) to 1204

Eleanor of Aquitaine plays an important role in Medieval Europe. Born in Nieul sur l'Autise, hieresse of the Earls of Poitou and the Dukes of Aquitaine, she marries first the French King Louis VII (who gave Nieul sur l'Autise the status of a Royal Abbey) and then Henry II Plantagenêt, future king of England. She inverts the balance of power by bringing her lands to one and then the other.

RICHARD THE LIONHEART

1157 to 1199

He is the son of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and Duke of Aquitaine. He sets sail from the port at Talmont for the 3rd Crusade. A well-known hunter, who hunts often near to Talmont Saint Hilaire or La Roche sur Yon. Numerous Abbeys, such as Saint Jean d'Orbestier or Lieu-Dieu, benefitted from his influence to develop.

GILLES DE RAIS

1405 to 1440

Gilles of Laval, Lord of Retz or de Rais, is a comrade in arms to Joan of Arc. At just 25 he became Marechal de France. The present-day county of the Vendée, made up part of his land. Greatly affected by Joan of Arc's death, he moved into his fortress at Tiffauges from where is born the legend of Blue Beard....



ARMAND DU PLESSIS DE RICHELIEU

1585 to 1642

The famous Cardinal - Richelieu ! Initially he was a priest in Luçon between 1608 and 1622 before becoming one of the major political figures for his époque. He became the Prime minister to King Louis XIII.



NAPOLÉON Ist

1769 to 1821

He was the first French Emperor. He orders the construction of a new town in La Roche sur Yon, making it the administrative centre for the Vendée. He creates, with his engineers, Valot and Cormier, an architectural layout in the form of a pentagon organised like a chess board.

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU

1841 to 1929

The "Father of Victory" was born in Mouilleron en Pareds and buried at Mouchamps. A major politician of his time, he was appointed head of the French Government on two occasions and made a major contribution to achieving victory during the First World War.

JEAN DE LATTRE DE TASSIGNY

1889 to 1952

This soldier was born in Mouilleron en Pareds, where he is buried today. He fought in 1916 at Verdun, in a regiment mainly composed of Vendéans. He was also the Commander of the 1st French army, took part in the 1944 landings and accepted the German surrender in 1945 on behalf of La France.



Did you know?

The birthplace of Georges Clemenceau and Jean de Lattre de Tassigny are located in the same town, a few metres from each other.

Some key dates



The first population living from livestock populated the Vendée in the Neolithic period. Traces of polished stones were found in about twenty sites, including Champ-Durand in Nieul sur l'Autise.

AROUND
6000
YEARS BC

6000

57 BC

The arrival of Caesar's legions in the Bas-Poitou (now the Vendée).

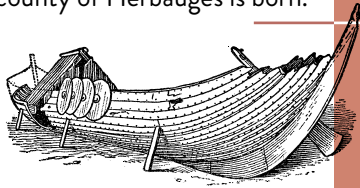


The Bas-Poitou is organised to fight against the Viking threat and Norman raids. The county of Herbauges is born.

820

1157

Poitou becomes a part of what is now the Plantagenet Empire, through the remarrying of Eleanor of Aquitaine, heiress of the counts of Poitou, with the English King Henry II Plantagenet.



Richard the Lionheart succeeded his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine and makes Talmont one of his places of residence.

1189

1472

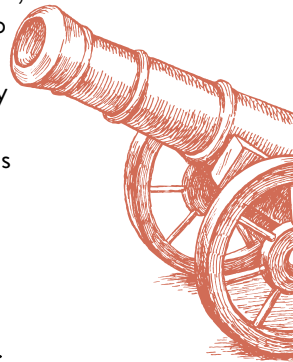
Louis XI, orders, on the spot, the development of the port of Les Sables d'Olonne in 1472.



The Protestants take over Les Sables d'Olonne and Talmont. On the 16th of April, Louis XIII comes in person with his army to defeat the Huguenots.

1622

As a French tradition, the two main rivers, the Grand and Petit Lay, were chosen to rename the county as "les 2 lays". With the play on words on "laid" meaning ugly in French, there was a risk that it would offend the susceptibility of the 2 hideous local politicians. The Vendée's name is chosen, even though it is a much less significant river.



The beginning of the Vendean uprising. Republicans are massacred in Machecoul, in the militarised zone, the Vendée War is born.

MARCH

1793

JANUARY-MARCH

1794

Peace is signed on the 17th February near Nantes, at La Jaunaye. Charette and Sapinaud were the first to sign, followed two months later by Stofflet.

1795

MARCH

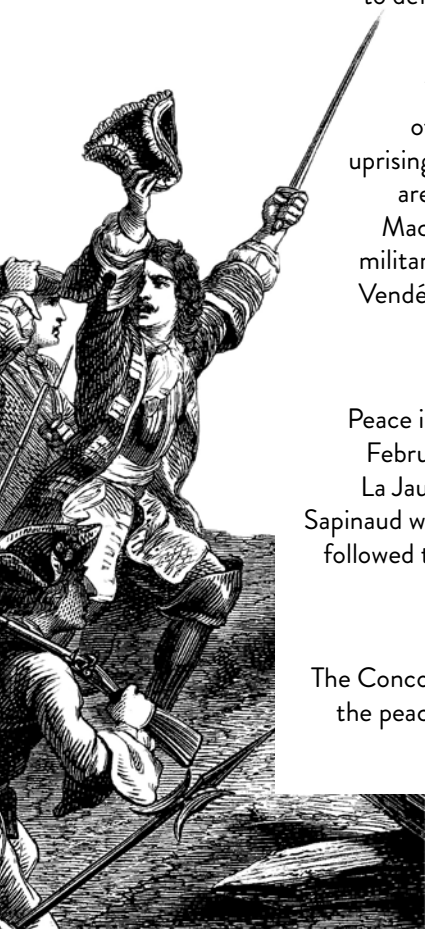
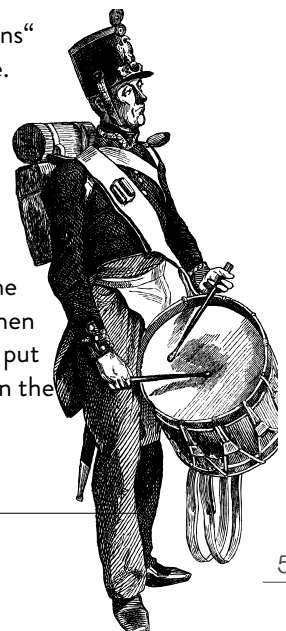
1796

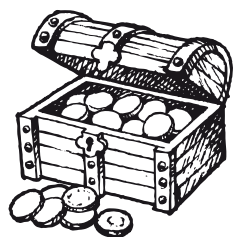
The Concordat puts an end to the peace process, ensuring religious freedom.

1801

Turreau's "Infernal Columns" reign terror in the Vendée.

Charrette is arrested at the Logis de la Chabotterie, then shot in Nantes. His death put an end to the Great War in the Vendée.





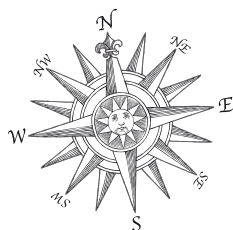
NEW IN
2022



Play with the Vendée
by downloading for free

Treasures of the Vendée

The quest of Pirate Jeanne



The Vendée is full of hidden treasures and mysterious adventures for you to pursue in real life!

Are you ready for the adventure ?

With « Trésors de Vendée, Les Enquêtes de Jeanne la pirate », (Treasures of the Vendée, Jeanne the pirate's investigates) you will embark on incredible expeditions to discover various different sites (museums, castles, etc...) with innovating and fun treasure hunts to enjoy as a family or among friends.

Jeanne the pirate invites you to venture off the beaten track and discover new places in an unusual way!

These exploration games are based on a scenario, so let your magic wand (your smartphone or tablet) guide you.

Scenario :

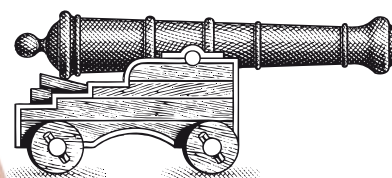
Jeanne is a Vendean pirate that is always on the lookout for new treasures to discover and protect. Her heart beats for a region whose riches she defends and preserves. She has heard that a group of mercenaries want to seize the "Heart of secrets" that contains unusual information about the most important sites in the Vendée. Set out on an adventure with Jeanne to collect the treasures and secrets of the sites before it is too late!

Prepare to board!

Inspired by Jeanne de Belleville, the first female pirate in history, born in Montaigu's fortified castle. The game lasts roughly 1h to 1h30: where skill or speed, observation or manipulation, logic or even a little bit of madness will be needed. There are an infinite number of ingenious challenges waiting for you during this unique experience. So, it's up to you !



Download the app for
free on Apple Store and
Play Store from
June 2022.



1. The most beautiful heritage addresses

1.1 Beautiful stones setting the scene



A JOURNEY TO NEOLITHIC TIMES

Dolmens and menhirs, alignments These landmarks that have stood the test of time, bear witness to impressive stone structures, whose exact function is still unknown, as well as the activity that reigned over these Neolithic sites of the Vendée. We can only imagine the life of these ancestors, as we contemplate and admire the “King of Menhirs”, one of the tallest in France situated at the Camp de César in Avrillé, or even the Cous megalithic necropolis in Bazoges en Pareds.

Le Préhisto'site du CAIRN, a must-see !

In the Vendée, there is a unique heritage dating back to prehistoric times: the menhirs and dolmens. Located in Saint-Hilaire-la-Forêt, the CAIRN Préhisto'site, a fun, educational and living museum, welcomes visitors to the land of megaliths in the Talmondaï region. In this area alone, there are 68 megaliths (including the “King of Menhirs” which measures 8m70). The aim of the Préhisto'site is to help visitors discover these sandstone or granite giants. The park is made up of various theme areas: the prehistoric garden, an area demonstrating how menhirs are moved, a 3D animal hunting experience, a reconstruction of a Bronze Age dwelling, the fishing area, the nomad living area, the “small stone giants” area (megalithic reconstructions), a jeweller-making workshop and the art area with a charcoal drawing workshop. A treasure hunt entitled « Dans la peau de Cro-Magnon » (literally in Cro-Magnon shoes) is available free of charge. The Préhisto'site also has a museum area, consisting of 3 exhibition rooms, or 350m² on prehistoric discoveries. These exhibitions are designed to be interactive, have labelled reconstructions, scale models, background sounds and videos... creating for visitors an immersive experience into the daily lives of our ancestors.



Visit the site : www.cairn-prehistoire.com



In Les Lucs sur Boulogne, the Historial de la Vendée offers an opportunity to meet Neolithic hunters in an exhibition area specifically devoted to this period.



Visit the site : www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Historial-de-Vendee

THE CASTLES TELL THE OWN STORY

The Medieval castle of Noirmoutier houses a museum that traces the history of the island since prehistoric times. The panoramic view from the top of the ramparts is well worth the effort. To fully immerse yourself in the past, you should have a wander through one of the oldest districts of the island, namely Banzeau, with its narrow streets inhabited since the 11th century.



Learn more about the maritime heritage of the Ile de Noirmoutier at the Hôtel Jacobsen : www.ile-noirmoutier.com/fr/que-faire-sur-l-ile/patrimoine-sites-de-visites/hotel-jacobsen-centre-des-patrimoines-maritimes



Built on a rocky mount, the castle of Apremont dominates the Vie valley, a strategic place occupied by a stronghold from the 11th century. From the Middle Ages, the surrounding wall and the north gate remain. From 1534, Philippe Chabot de Brion, admiral of France and friend of king Francis Ist, built a dwelling flanked by two towers in the early Renaissance style, where mullioned windows and sculpted friezes coexist with gunports. The cavalry ramp, in the embankment of the terrace, provides access to the castle from the banks of the river. Embellished by its balustrade, the East tower offers a panorama to be discovered during the guided tour. An exhibition will let you learn more about the different elements of the Renaissance costume, and why not even take a part in a dressing session yourself!



En savoir plus : www.tourisme-vie-et-boulogne.fr



The **Château de Commequiers** was modelled on the Bastille fortress, and is octagonal in shape, with eight massive towers that still stand guard over the moat and the surrounding area. It was owned by the La Trémoille Lords, before being dismantled by Cardinal Richelieu in the 17th century like so many other castles in the region.



It is currently being restored but you can still walk around the outside.



Situated in one of the Medieval strongholds at the gateway to the county of Poitou, the Mortagne sur Sèvre fortress fell into the hands of the English, who fortified the castle during the Hundred Years war. The castle has a tower whose construction is in a spur design, unique in France and known as the “English tower”. Today, the «Treasure tower» and a manor house have also survived.



The 18th century chateau de Landebaudière is situated in the Vendean bocage at La Gaubretière. The castle witnessed the major events of the 1793 uprising in the Vendée. It was the rallying point for the peasant soldiers led by the Marquis de Boisy. Today, it is a place of culture.





The Château de la Guignardière is situated in Avrillé and was built around 1555 for King Henri II's Great Breadmaster (one of the great Officers of the Crown of France). From its first owner, Jean Girard, then Georges Clemenceau who lived there for some time, to its current owners, this Renaissance treasure has survived over the centuries and throughout history. Since 1992, thanks to the work and commitment of its current owners, the castle has been restored. Listed as a private historical monument, it is now maintained through the touristic activity created in 2002 with the leisure park "Le Château des Aventuriers". Today, a large part of the castle can be visited: the billiard room, the library, the dining room, the main staircase, the King's bedroom, and the impressive wooden roof rafters.



Visit the Site: www.chateau-aventuriers.com



The Château de Tiffauges is one of the largest medieval sites in the Western region of the "Marches de Bretagne" (the name of the old border areas between Brittany and France, many fortresses were built in this region, forming a line of defence running from north to south). Tiffauges is a living witness to the Middle Ages thanks to many activities that bring to life warfare techniques and chivalry. It also houses a museum of war machines typical of that period. People sometimes call it Bluebeard's Castle, as it was home to the sulphurous character - Gilles de Rais, Joan of Arc's comrade-in-arms and a hero of the Hundred Years War. He ended up being burned at the stake for committing numerous infanticides.



Visit the Site: www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Chateau-de-Tiffauges

The château de Terre Neuve, a Renaissance masterpiece, is located in the heart of Fontenay le Comte, the only Town of Art and History in the Vendée. The chateau has been in the care of the same family since 1805. It is, however, possible to visit it during a guided tour, even if it is still inhabited. Visitors can admire impressive architectural features such as the carved stone coffers on the ceilings, the majestic Renaissance interiors and an imposing fireplace adorned with alchemical symbols that provoke curiosity. Many personalities have stayed there, from Octave de Rochebrune, the famous aquafortist (an etcher or engraver) who owned the house at the time, to Georges Simenon, Francois Viète (father of algebra) and Agrippa d'Aubigné.



Visit the Site: www.chateau-terreneuve.com





FOLLOW THE CHURCH TOWERS

The Saint Nicolas Church in Brem sur Mer is one of the oldest in the Vendée. It was damaged during the Wars of Religions in the 17th century. A statue of Saint Nicolas is carved on the facade, surrounded by mysterious symbols, which still fascinate scholars.

The Prieuré de Grammont sits in the heart of the Chassay forest. It was founded by Richard the Lionheart for the Grandmontain order of monks, who lived as hermits in the most secluded place imaginable.


 Visit the site: www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Prieure-de-Grammont

No later than 1069, Airaud Gassedener, an aristocrat and close associate of the Count of Poitiers- Duke of Aquitaine, founded the abbey of Nieul sur l'Autise. Entrusted with the canons of Saint Augustin, in 1141, it welcomed the beautiful Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen of France and then of England.

Find out more in "Extraordinary stories" on page 10.

 Visit the site: www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Abbaye-de-Nieul-s-l-Autise

Five abbeys built on the same site, and 13 centuries of history that visitors follow during a visit to the Saint-Michel-en-l'Herm Abbey. Built in 682 on an island in the Gulf des Pictons by monks from Noirmoutier, it was frequently attacked by Viking invaders. The abbey was home to Benedictine monks who worked to drain, what would become the future "Marais Poitevin". In the 12th century the abbey was one of the wealthiest in France thanks to the production of white gold = otherwise known as salt.


 Visit the site: www.sudvendee.littoral.com/visites/abbaye-royale

The little chapel of Notre Dame de Bonne Espérance in Les Sables d'Olonne is still visited by seafarers and their families. The chapel was built in 1850 to house a statue of Mary, who is said to have saved a shipwrecked sailor.


The Abbey of Maillezais in the heart of the Green Venice has witnessed over 1000 years of history. In the summer its majestic ruins can be discovered amidst flowering lavender beds, that inspire the imagination. From the year 1000, Maillezais was only an island in the middle of the Gulf des Pictons, that saw the construction of the first monastery. It witnessed also the successive wars transforming the Cathedral's 7 bell towers into a stone quarry. Amazing historical shows and immersive visits invite you on a fabulous journey back in time. You will encounter Francois Rabelais who came to Fontenay le Comte before joining G. D'Estissac, Bishop of Maillezais in the 1490's. Pantagruel and Gargantua were inspired by his years spent in the convents and abbeys of Poitou.

 Visit the site: www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Abbaye-de-Maillezais

The Ile Chauvet Abbey located in Bois de Cené is a Romanesque style abbey, with a magnificent doorway consisting of five pointed arches, unique in the Vendée. It was built on a small island in the Bay of Bourgneuf by Benedictine monks who were working to turn the neighbouring marshlands into meadows and salt marshes. It has also been destroyed many times over the centuries.

 Visit the site: www.festivallechauvet-2vb.fr/index.php/visite-de-labbaye/

Founded by Richard the Lionheart, the Royal Abbey of Notre Dame du Lieu in Jard sur Mer was the venue for several fires and pillaging, the last of which occurred in 1568 during the Wars of Religion. It then became a working farm and was subsequently bought by a merchant who resold its equipment during the 18th century. Since 2013, it has been possible to visit the site again.

 Visit the site: www.abbayedelieudieu.wordpress.com



WINDMILLS UNLIKE ANY OTHERS

Their sails were used to communicate with the Vendéens rebels the movements of enemy troops from one hilltop to another during the War in the Vendée. They were destroyed during the French Revolution. The greatest number can be found on the aptly named Colline aux Moulins in Mouilleron Saint Germain. During the



19th century, 14 of them were rebuilt. In 1929 the De Lattre de Tassigny family purchased 2 of them, following the advice of Georges Clemenceau.

The Mont des Alouettes is one of the highest summits in the Vendée, at 232 metres, offering a panoramic view across the Vendean countryside. Two of the eight windmills built in the 16th century still exist. The Duchess of Angoulême had a chapel built to commemorate the Wars in the Vendée, which was not inaugurated until 1968.

VENDEAN ARCHITECTURE

Les bourrines (a regional term for thatched cottages)

In the heart of the Vendean Breton marshes, an unspoiled and preserved natural area covering 60 hectares of marshland, is home to various traditional local species of animals - such as the ducks and black hens from Challans, the maraîchine cow and the Poitou donkey. Le Daviaud Eco-Museum, presents these different species as well as the distinctive Bourrine de Louise. A traditional maraîchine dwelling that takes its name from its last owner. Its walls were made from local marsh clay and the roof from reeds, according to local methods that still exists today.



Visit the site: www.ledaviaud.fr

Built in 1818, the bourrine of Amandine du Bois Juquaud in Saint Hilaire de Riez is another charming example of rural heritage. In the 1980's, restoration work was carried out on the inside the house as well as the barn and the milking parlour (dairy). Thanks to this work, visitors can now experience the daily life of the "maraîchins" (inhabitants of the marshes) and the atmosphere of a small marshland farm.



Visit the site: www.sainthilairederiez.fr/la-bourrine-du-bois-juquaud

Seaside architecture

Villa Grosse Terre overlooks the coastline near Saint Gilles Croix de Vie. Set in the grounds of a former fort, it first belonged to the architect Roger Gonthier, who designed the train station in Limoges, and who drew up the plans inspired by the atmosphere of the place - the changing coastal light and the force of the ocean pounding the rocks below. Since 1975, the villa has been listed as a 20th century historical monument heritage site. The botanical garden, open to the public, is home to a variety of indigenous plants found along the Vendean coastline.

With the arrival of the first rail services to Les Sables d'Olonne, the history of sea bathing and seaside architecture began. The Villa Charlotte, located in the historic quarter of La Chaume, is without doubt, the first "Belle Epoque" villa to have been built there. It belonged to Joseph Chailley, a Vendean MP and mayor of Les Sables d'Olonne. Thanks to his wife, a violinist, the villa, and its gardens experienced a high social status. The current restoration project aims to restore its exceptional character and to revive Charlottes's personality by creating a cultural centre and an artist's residence.



La Villa Grosse Terre

The Vendean Dwellings (Logis)



Being a unique witness to a turbulent history, the Vendean Logis multiplied for centuries, its original layout throughout the entire region. The rectangular courtyard is surrounded by farm buildings, outhouses and a manor house that opens onto the garden. This four-sided design, inherited from the Gallo-Roman villa, reached its peak in the second half of the 16th century, and lasted until shortly before the French Revolution and without any major changes.



Visit the site: en savoir plus dans la salle des maquettes du Logis de la Chabotterie : www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Logis-de-la-Chabotterie



A WATER CULTURE

To one side, the Atlantic, where traditional or open sea fishing has many perils and dangers. On the other, the inland side, the titanic draining work carried out over the centuries shaped the Marais Poitevin, and still leaves its mark on the Vendean landscape.



The Passage du Gois is a 4.2km long submersible road linking the island of Noirmoutier to the mainland. Twice daily, two hours before and after low tide, two conflicting sea currents meet and create a wonderful sight. After which the Le Gois can be covered by 1.5 to 4 metres of water depending on the tidal coefficients. Paved in 1806, the Gois causeway (taken from the local patois (dialect) “goiser” meaning “to get one’s feet wet by walking in the water”). At the end of the 1930’s, the Gois became the main access road to the island and the oyster beds. Today, beacon markers are posted every hundred metres. Six beacons are known as “parrot masts” and since the end of the 19th century three beacons equipped with cages have offered refuge to walkers surprised by the incoming tides. Since the 11th of July 1942, the Passage du Gois (the causeway, dykes, and refuge beacons) has been listed as part of the Historic Monuments Inventory.

Fish sluices are an ancient fishing technique. U-shaped, made of dry-stone walls laid on the beach, which allowed fish to be caught when the sea receded thanks to a water flow grid called “bouchot”. The Pointe du Grouin du Cou, measuring 9,900m², consisting of a 300-metre-long wall and four doors, has been restored. It bears witness to the extent of the construction work, often washed away by the sea, with some 1,200 tonnes of stones, each one laid by hand.



At every spring tide, the shipwreck of the “Barge II” can be seen on the beach of Les Sables d’Olonne. A 55-metre-long boat that accompanied a tugboat and an escort ship had come to deliver coal. In 1919, due to bad weather conditions, she missed the harbour entrance and ran aground, with nine crew members, all of whom were rescued.

The « harbour lights ». Among these lighthouses, the Tour Josephine (3,5 metres high) named after the Empress, is probably the oldest maritime construction in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie. Its flamboyant crown dates from 1852. There is a local custom whereby newlyweds would dance around the lighthouse at the end of the Môle as a good omen. In 1972 one of the last large lighthouses built (in France) was the one at Grosse Terre, standing 17 metres high.



The hydraulic works of the Marais Poitevin. The Marais Poitevin (Natural regional park, part of which is listed as a “Grand Site de France”) was created on a former marine gulf, thanks to drainage work initiated by the monks at the end of the 10th century. In total, more than 8,200km of waterways and 594 hydraulic structures were built up to the 20th century: sea gates, flood gates, dykes, dams, locks, etc. Among the most exceptional are: The Aqueduct of Maillé, allows the waters of the Jeune Autise and those of the Vix canal to meet without mixing, the Ile d’Elle chasm was built during 1663-1664 to avoid the crossing and mixing of waters of the Vendée and Vix Canal. The Varenne gates at Traize – one of the last gates still in use and recently restored, the 5 Abbots gates at Sainte Radégonde des Noyers, on the eponymous canal where the structure is reinforced, the locks at Bazoin, the most important hydraulic junction of the Marais Poitevin, the harbour at L’Epine....

1.2 Bedtime stories lead to dreams

CHÂTEAU HOTELS IN THE VENDÉE...UNIQUE PLACE TO STAY



Built in 1407 by Jehan du Puy du Fou, **the Chateau Boisniard**, situated in Chambretaud, is the only 5-star hotel in the Vendée. At just a few kilometres from the Puy du fou, it welcomes guests into its 10 majestic rooms.



www.chateau-boisniard.com



A few kilometres away, in Saint Laurent Sur Sevre, the 4-star hotel **Chateau de la Barbinière**, welcomes visitors with rooms and suites decorated in a sober, refined, and elegant style.



www.chateau-barbinere.com



In Challans, the 3-star **Chateau de la Vérie** was built at the end of the 16th century on the ruins of an old feudal castle. Today, the hotel offers 21 rooms.



www.chateau-de-la-verie.com



Located on the island of Noirmoutier, **the Hostellerie du Général d'Elbée** is an 18th century building listed as a historical monument. Situated between the medieval castle, the Jacobsen pier, and the Port Patrimoine in Noirmoutier en L'île, this 4-star hotel is steeped in history with 26 customised rooms decorated by the interior designer Chantal Peyrat.



www.generaldelbee.fr

FROM HERITAGE TO CAMPSITES, THERE IS JUST ONE STEP !

In Saint Julien des Landes, **the 5-star campsite La Garangeoire** has developed around the Maison Directoire (a decorative style popular in the late 17th and early 18th century) built in 1842. The estate has a rich history, dating back to the Gallo-Roman period, of which a few vestiges remain. It became the property of the present family in the middle of the 19th century. Situated in an exceptional natural setting, the property extends over 200 hectares, of which 20 hectares are used for the campsite.



www.camping-la-garangeoire.com

Also, in Saint Julien des Landes, at **the 4-star Yelloh village campsite Chateau la Forêt**, all the mobile-homes, chalets, furnished tents or unusual accommodation (a bubble room or tree house) are located around the chateau.



www.chateaulaforet.com



Three other Vendean campsites have been established around heritage buildings... In **Avrille**, a 16th century manor house at **the 5-star Les Forges campsite**, a windmill at the 4-star campsite **the Moulin de la Salle in Les Sables d'Olonne**, and the pretty farmhouse and dovecote at **Le Colombier - a naturist campsite in Saint Martin Lars en Saint Hermine**.

GUEST ROOMS OR THE VENDEAN WAY OF LIFE



In the very heart of Fontenay le Comte, a town of art and history, staying at the Demeure Les Marronniers is like being immersed in the charm of a 17th-century bourgeois house on a 1,800m² property, including the music room and a landscaped garden.



chambre-dhotes-demeure-les-marronniers.business.site



Located in a quiet family home only 8 kms from the Puy du Fou, **the Château de la Flocellière** is a place steeped in history and listed as a "Historical Monument". It offers 5 rooms in the chateau and 2 historical gites: Le Donjon (for 10 people) and Le Pavillon Louis XIII (for 12 to 14 people).



www.chateaudelaflocelliere.com



A totally different atmosphere can be found in Les Epesses, at the 17th century building **Le Logis du Grand Moulin**. Originally a flour mill, then a counter-revolutionary printing works, a paper mill as well as a thread mill. It now offers 4 rooms.



www.logisdugrandmoulin.com



The Haute Braconnière guest rooms, created in the tower of a preserved 17th century Huguenot residence, combines authenticity with refinement, right down to the swimming pool installed in the 18th barn, surrounded by a natural environment.



www.lahautebraconnierechambresdhotes.fr



In La Gaubretière, **the Château des Tourelles** has 4 rooms. The building contains hidden treasures such as the Napoleonic reception room lit by Murano-glass chandeliers.



www.lechateaudestourellesenvendee.com



In Breuil Barret, you can stay in a former presbytery built in 1868. Transformed into a charming guest house, **La Maison du Pinier** can accommodate up to 10 people.



www.lamaisondupinier.fr



The Manoir de Ponsay in Chantonay was built in 1492. It has been in the same family for 11 generations. The 5 spacious rooms are equipped with all home comforts and have their own private bathroom.



www.manoirdeponsay.com



Still in La Gaubretière, **the Château La Pierre Levée** offers 3 rooms, « La Royale », « La Fleurie » and « La Suite ». Outside, the park's century-old trees and pond are not without their own charm...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F6v-_5abBU



Further south, in the Marais Poitevin, **Le Portail** is an exceptional residence situated in Moreilles. This family home is the former gatehouse to the Abbey of Moreilles.



www.portail-marais-poitevin.com

HOLIDAY COTTAGES IN THE VENDEE: SLEEPING IN THE HEART OF HERITAGE



The Holiday cottage **Gîte du Vieux Château** is located at the end of a small cul-de-sac in the heart of the parish of Poiroux. The imposing remains of a fortress dominating the moat were undoubtedly part of the town's fortifications. This 4-star spacious self-catering holiday cottage (263 m²) can accommodate 10 people.



www.legiteduvieuxchateau.com



At the **Gîte des 7 Merlettes**, it's like being at home but in a castle. Located in La Rabatelière, this 10-person gîte was created in a wing of a real castle. While enjoying all the amenities, including a Jacuzzi for five on the terrace, guests can venture out into the 24-hectare park.



www.gites-de-france.com/fr/pays-de-la-loire/vendee/gite-des-7-merlettes-h85g020242



The **Château du Parc Soubise** in Mouchamps. The outbuildings of this seigneurial estate in the Vendean countryside have been converted into four houses. The stones of this estate bear the memory of personalities and events from the turbulent history of the Vendée: the "lady of the Soubise Park" a renowned mathematician from the Parthenay family, who imposed Protestantism in the Vendée during the 16th, Henri de Rohan and the "Huguenot War". And finally, the Vendée War, which also came to a bloody end at the Parc de Soubise in early 1794, with the burning of the castle.



www.parcsubise.fr



The small **Château Le Retail** is located close to the forest of Mervent at Saint Hilaire des Loges in the heart of the Vendean countryside. Transformed into a charming holiday home, it can accommodate up to 6 guests. The main house dates from 1341 and the medieval vaulted cellar dates back to the 11th century.



www.chateauleretail.com



In Moutiers sur Lay, this charming old world gîte (an outbuilding) is located on **the Château de la Bredurière** wine estate in the heart of the Mareuil wine circuit. It can accommodate 5 people. Surrounding the castle, there are various historical buildings such as the dovecote, the stables, the kennel and holy spring water.



www.chateau-breduriere.com



The **Château de Bourneau** has a Renaissance style, inspired by the Château d'Azay le Rideau. Within its grounds, the former outbuildings have been converted into 4 spacious gîtes (8 to 12 people): Le Parc, La Forêt, La Villa and Le Manoir.



chateaubourneau.com

SLEEPING IN A THATCHED COTTAGE

The Vendée's heritage is more than just castles and large houses. In the Vendean Breton Marshes, the traditional habitat is the bourrine (a one storey thatched cottages). In Saint Gervais, two gîtes "La Bourrine" and "L'escale" have been created in an old longhouse. The 37m² gîte was even set up in a henhouse.

www.lesgitesdelagrandeborderie.com



SLEEPING IN A MILL

Yet another ambiance in **the Vallée de la Roche in Tiffauges**. This former watermill, transformed into a gîte, is located on the banks of the Sèvre Nantaise river, where modern art is displayed in its most exquisite forms.

www.lavalleedelaroche.fr



The **Moulin de Poupet gîte**, an old mill renovated into a large capacity gîte (15 beds), has a terrace overlooking the Sèvre Nantaise river. The gîte is ideally situated in the Poupet Valley near Saint Malo du Bois, surrounded by nature.

www.gites.valleedepoupet.com

The owners, in love with the site, old stones, and the heritage left by previous generations, acquired this water mill a few years ago. They transformed it into holiday accommodation "**Le Moulin de l'âne Roméo**" in La Jaudonnière.

www.facebook.com/lemoulindeylaneromeo/photos



2. 2. Extraordinary Stories of Heritage and Culture

2.1 Prominent figures impact on history

L'Abbaye Royale de Nieul sur l'Autise. The Saint Vincent's Abbey owes its fame to Eleanor of Aquitaine, who may have been born in Nieul sur l'Autise. She was Queen of France and then Queen of England, and the mother of Richard the Lionheart. Eleanor also accorded the Saint Vincent abbey the status of Royal abbey, thus giving it the Kings protection and a period of great prosperity. Even today, it is still a unique historical and heritage site of Western France, thanks to its well-preserved monastic areas. Visitors can walk in the footsteps of Eleanor from the Chapter house, to the Refectory, to the cellars and the Enfeus gallery. Then continuing from the canons' dormitories to a vaulted Romanesque cloister perfectly preserved. During the summer visitors can enjoy one of the evening shows that brings history to life. The cloister's upper gallery echoes with sounds of the troubadours (of whom Eleanor was a sponsor) thanks to medieval musical instruments (none of which remain) reconstructed based on sculptures.



www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Abbaye-de-Nieul-s-l-Autise



The Château de Talmont Saint Hilaire. In the past, the sea came to the foot of the Chateau de Talmont, home to Richard the Lionheart, who took the title of Prince of Talmont, following the remarrying of Eleanor of Aquitaine with the King of England. The sea is now over 6 kilometres away, but it has left this ancient medieval fortress of the 11th and 12th centuries to watch over the town of Talmont Saint Hilaire. Prince Talmont modified its architecture, by adding three towers and a second inner wall. In the absence of a descendant, the castle and its territories passed into the hands of the Viscounts of Thouars. Following the Huguenot wars, and after the siege of La Rochelle in 1628, the castle was dismantled on the orders of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu.



www.talmont-saint-hilaire.fr/chateau-de-talmont-2021

La Citadelle (Fort de Pierre Levée) Ile d'Yeu

Located on the high ground overlooking Port-Joinville, the citadel was built between 1858 and 1866 on the site of a large standing stone, hence the name Pierre Levée. A historical heritage linked to the island's military defence, it also served as a state prison, a barracks and where the Marshal Pétain was placed under detention from November 1945 to June 1951.



www.ile-yeu.fr/toute-l-offre/fort-de-pierre-levee-1377620



A village and two men who served France. The Clemenceau-de Lattre national Museum was inaugurated in 2018. It brings together the birthplaces of these two illustrious men from political and military history and both natives of Mouilleron en Pareds. A tour entitled « Clemenceau's Vendée » allows visitors to discover the private life of this great man at his summer residence in Saint Vincent sur Jard. The tour is possible thanks to a virtual reality app that is superposed or overlapped on the actual surroundings. By visiting the House-museum in Mouilleron Saint Germain, visitors will not only be plunged into the heart of recent history, but also understand the modern nature of Georges Clemenceau's thoughts and actions.



www.musee-clemenceau-delattre.fr

NAPOLEON CREATED NAPOLEON'S TOWN



On the 25th of May 1804, only seven days after his declaration as emperor, Napoleon 1st decided by decree to transfer the Vendée's administrative headquarters (prefecture). The move to La Roche sur Yon made the headquarters much more central than the former location in Fontenay le Comte. The emperor, therefore, ordered the creation of a new town with all the civil and civic symbols of the time: a prefecture, a high school, a courthouse, a prison, a barracks, a hospital, and a parade ground. The engineers Cormier and Valot decided to give La Roche sur Yon a new identity. They adopted a pentagonal shape and a draughtboard layout, which even today is still the main and most outstanding feature of the town centre.

Unprecedented in Europe, the town has changed its name eight times in seventy years: **La Roche-sur-Yon** before 1804; Napoléon from 1804 to 1814; La-Roche-sur-Yon a period of two weeks in 1814; Bourbon-Vendée from April 1814 to the following April; Napoléon from April 1815 to June 1815; Bourbon-Vendée from June 1815 to 1848; Napoléon from 1848 to 1852; Napoléon-Vendée from 1852 to 1870; and La Roche sur Yon, since 1870.



2.2 The Vendée War

The Vendée War was short-lived but extremely violent, as demonstrated by the many monuments and calvaries that still celebrate the great Vendean leaders. In 1793, the uprising in the western provinces was prompted by taxes that penalised the rural communities and the massive mobilisation of the national guards in favour of the revolutionary regime. The first half of 1794 saw the infernal columns of General Turreau ravaging the Vendée. After a year-long truce following the signing of the Treaty of La Jaunaye, under the leadership of the Vendean leader Charette, the second battle of the Vendée began in 1795. It ended with the capture of General Charette in 1796, not far from the site of **La Chabotterie**. He was taken to Nantes to be tried and shot.

Among the monuments that bear witness to a history that has marked the region: **the Historial de la Vendée, the Memorial, the chapel of the Petits Lucs** at Les Luc sur Boulogne and **the church's stain glass windows** which evoke the massacre of 564 people. **The Logis de la Chabotterie, the Refuge de Grasla at Les Brouzils** which traces the life of the people who took refuge in the forest during the winter of 1794, **the Mont des Alouettes and its windmills, the chapel of La Tulévière...** A new route has been inaugurated in January 2022 at La Gaubretière.

During the day at **the Puy du Fou**, the "Dernier Panache" show is based on the Vendée War. It follows the glorious destiny of a French naval officer, François-Athanase Charrette de la Contrie, known as "Charrette". At nightfall, during the evening show "La Cinéscénie", the Maupillier family travels through history and one of its scenes is devoted to the Vendée War.



www.vendee-tourisme.com/inspirez-moi/culture-et-patrimoine/hauts-lieux-de-la-guerre-de-vendee



2.3 *Unlocking the Vendée's secrets and legends*



An ape in Brétignolles sur Mer. In 1911, a barrel washed up on a beach at Brétignolles sur Mer near Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, was retrieved by fishermen. When they drilled a hole in it, they realised that it contained brandy which everyone enjoyed. While transporting the precious prize on a cart, the barrel releases its occupant preserved in alcohol... An ape brought back from some distant land by a collector. The story of the ape brandy drinkers continues to be part of local history. And the ape? After having been displayed on a bar counter, the “Le Bazar de la tentation” shop and then in a pharmacy, today it can be seen at the Maison du Pêcheur in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie.



The Château Saint Clair near the jetty in Les Sables d'Olonne is overlooked by the Arundel Tower. It also supports the beacon of La Chaume's lighthouse. During the Wars of Religion, the Calvinists who arrived from La Rochelle occupied the castle but were soon evicted on Richelieu's orders. Its walls had previously been the setting for a brief but tragic love affair between the young officer Tollet de Beauchamp, appointed Governor of the fortress, and the daughter of Tax collector in Les Sables, Jehanne Cardin. Tollet de Beauchamp kidnapped Jehanne which caused much outrage among the Sablaise population, who besieged the castle. The officer appeared at the gates dressed in a festive outfit accompanied by the young women, whom he immediately married. She died the following year, along with her newborn child.

The sanctuary of La Salette. During the anticlerical period in France at the end of the 19th century, a massive reconstruction of places of worship took place in the Vendée. Among these, the sanctuary of La Salette was initiated by Abbot Hillairet, parish priest of La Rabatelière. It shows an architectural group of buildings that does not fail to intrigue. Built between 1873 and 1908, it represents the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the Alps to the children of La Salette in 1846. In an omnipresent natural setting, visitors discover the Stations of the Cross amidst a keep and turrets.



Gilles de Rais was a knight and lord of the Breton border, a hero of the Hundred Years War, he fought alongside Joan of Arc, for which he was appointed Marshal of France in 1429, before being discredited for his profligacy. Above all, he remains famous for his alchemical aberrations and his infanticide crimes, which led to his resounding trial and execution at the stake in 1440. Gilles de Rais was one of the main architects of the **Tiffauges** site during the 15th century. He carried out numerous architectural modifications to the fortress, creating the main building (corps de Logis), a gatehouse, and renovating the keep.





The Mélusine Tower. According to legend, it was the Mélusine fairy who built the tower using magic....and in just one night with “trois dornées de pierres et d’une goulée d’Ève” (from three apronfuls of stones and a mouthful of water). Every Saturday due to a magic spell, her lower body (from the waist down) is transformed into a serpent’s tail, and for this reason Melusine would disappear every week. The tower of Vouvant was nevertheless the highest (45 metres) and the first-round tower built in the Vendée. The ancient keep was part of the Lusignan castle, of which only the tower remains to this day. It has 5 floors and a terrace at the top.

Time-mission in Vouvant

Historical error! Our time traveller, the Melusine fairy, has changed the course of history. We need to join her in 1242 to help her takeover the defence of the castle of Vouvant. A playful journey combining virtual reality and games. Will you be able to save the Mélusine tower?

- New in 2022: available from the 1st July. Collect your adventure kit at the local tourist office. (8€/kit).

2.3 Folklore

Le Vieux-Château, Ile d’Yeu. It is believed that Hergé used this castle as inspiration for Tintin’s adventures in “The Black Island”. The Vieux-chateau of Ile d’Yeu, clinging to its rocky outcrop, built at the outbreak of the Hundred Year’s War, has had to withstand many repeated attacks. Like many other Medieval fortresses, it provided refuge to the islanders during enemy invasions.



Le Petit château des cèdres in Mouchamps. Built in 1863, the château has been home to five refined guest rooms since 2017. It was once owned by the famous – Ernest Beaux, the “nose” of Chanel and creator of the legendary perfume – N° 5.



Espace Gaston Chaissac. The former public school of Sainte-Florence where Chaissac lived during the 1950s, pays tribute to his pictorial and unique artwork. These pieces of art can even be seen in the toilets, considered a historical monument. The photographer Robert Doisneau immortalised some of these works.



In Saint Michel en L’Herm, **the Deluol Museum** is one of the largest artistic sites in the Southern Vendée. After settling in the town, André Deluol created between 1929 and 1995 more than 150 works of art which are on display. The beauty of the human body was his greatest source of inspiration and led him to carve his works directly into stone, marble, or walnut wood. After his death, the man of light and landscape donated his art to his beloved town.



Vouvant also has a charming little courtyard surrounded by small houses, where in 1715 during Christmas, is said that a miracle occurred in the “la Cour d’un Miracle”. A child suffering from a terrible fever asks for cherries from the tree in the courtyard. His grandmother went to the tree and to her astonishment was able to pick some cherries. When she returned, the child was cured. The following day, the only thing covering the tree was snow.

3. *An interactive heritage to be enjoyed with the family*

3.1 *Heritage reinvented to be better understood*

The Vendée, a region with a wide range of activities, has a wealth of heritage sites, reminders of its history and uniqueness. There is something for everyone: natural sites, museums, castles... All these tourist sites offer their visitors activities, making the experience fun and interesting. Whether it's in the Southern Vendée, the Bocage, or the Vendean Breton marshes, visitors are spoilt for choice. They can discover the Vendée as they have never seen it before. Here is a selection of lively tourist sites that will delight visitors' during their stay in the Vendée.

Le Daviaud in la Barre de Monts

In the heart of the Vendean Breton marshes, the Daviaud is a 5-hectare eco-museum. It allows visitors to discover and understand the working of the marshes, the history of their creation up until the present day. The visit includes 7 outdoor stages: the marshes, the salt marsh, the bourrine, the Daviaud farm and the barn (used for dances). There is also "le grenier de la mémoire" or the attic of memories as well as the bourrine of flavours, where typical local dishes can be sampled. Le Daviaud organises various activities, workshops, traditional festivals, and musical events throughout the season. An invitation for visitors to take part in the daily life of this remarkable place.



www.ledaviaud.fr



Le Château des Aventuriers in Avrillé

In Avrillé, the Château des Aventuriers offers a large number of activities: a mystery trail, an escape game in a haunted house, a police investigation using a tablet, a discovery trail in the forest, visits to the castle, a trail for the "little ones", inflatable games and skill-games. Inside this Renaissance castle, listed as a Historic Monument, young and old alike can take part in:

- "The Pirate's treasure": This is a giant treasure hunt. Children, collect the clues to solve the 20 riddles and find the treasure, then you will be a real pirate!
- "From the Dino to prehistory": Enter the fantastic world of prehistory and dinosaurs, thanks to augmented reality. A full-scale immersive experience, open your eyes and ears as the creatures are all around you, just as if you were actually there! Take part in the interactive game during the visit and receive a reward at the end!
- "The castle's secrets": children will need to solve the riddles to unlock the secrets of the castle. They will wander through the rooms using a tablet or a smartphone to help them. A real interactive discovery tour.




www.chateau-aventuriers.com



Château des Essarts


This site is steeped in more than 2,000 years of history. In particular, a Roman army sacrificial mound that became a feudal motte from the 9th to the 11th century. It became a fortified compound due to its 12th century tower and portcullis. Between the 13th and 14th century it served as a gatehouse before becoming a 16th century Renaissance residence. Over four hours of family activities are available in this unique historical site: special “Adventure “Days, fun nature trails, trampolines, old fashioned games, the “Les chroniques de Guillemette” show, guided tours and storytelling walks on Wednesday evenings.

 www.chateau-des-essarts.com



Château de Saint Mesmin

The Chateau de Saint Mesmin offers unusual entertainment that allows visitors to discover the site in a different way: from special children and adult activities to self-guided tours, each visitor can choose the one that suits them best. The theme for 2022 is “Fantastiques animaux » (fantastic animals). Whether real or imaginary, domestic or wild, animals literally invade this Medieval setting. Visitors will be able to discover them in every possible way. The castle offers other activities in low season.

 www.chateau-saintmesmin.com



Le Refuge de Grasla at Les Brouzils

The historical site set in the heart of the Grasla forest, is a reconstruction of a 1794 village. It represents the daily life of the local population who took refuge here during the Vendée War. Visitors can discover the site in an interesting way by taking part in archaeological research accompanied by a guide-actor. For unusual family experiences, interactive tours are also available, as well as fun workshops. On the agenda: having fun, lots of laughs and sharing a unique experience.

 www.refugedegrasla.fr





Logis de la Chabotterie at Montréverd

Gardeners and budding historians will be delighted to visit this late 18th century manor house and its French gardens. They bear witness to the capture of General Charette during the Vendée War. Families will discover the French way of life in a country manor house thanks to an audio guided tour of its 10 rooms, furnished with period furniture, objects and paintings. An interesting journey that takes visitors back to the 18th century.

Several activities are available on site: for younger children, the manor offers two treasure hunts as well as an activity booklet. Or as another option a ride in a horse-drawn carriage enables visitors to explore the property at a more relaxing pace. Alternatively, the escape game is a great way to take possession of the property while playing the detective, collecting clues, and solving the mysterious enigma in order to escape....



www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr



Château de Tiffauges

In this legendary castle, travel back to the time of Bluebeard. Visitors are well catered for, with a wide range of shows and activities on a captivating agenda: a presentation of war weapons, including catapults and many other medieval devices, a chivalry display with stunts and sword fights, where children can dress up in costume.... For those who are more enthusiastic, the Chateau of Tiffauges also offers an archery and crossbow training camp. As a family, take part in a guided tour, which retraces the castle's history.



www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

Abbaye de Nieul sur l'Autise at Rives d'Autise

The scenography tour brings this Romanesque masterpiece to life with a 3D tour, an optical theatre (an animated moving picture system), a film and virtual tours. Visitors are immersed in a whirlwind of special effects taking them back to Eleanor's time. A technological showpiece promoting heritage, not to mention the shows, costumed tours and many more activities. This is a place that the whole family will love!



www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr



3.2 *An artist who brings Vendean heritage to life*

A meeting with Christian Siloé, photographic artist



What does the Vendée represent in your works?

I discovered the Vendée in early October 2018.

I came to the Vendée for a few days, to discuss an important project with a couple of passionate collectors. They wanted to donate some works of the famous glass artist, Francois-Théodore Legas, to the Conches Glass Museum in the Eure. I created this museum almost twenty years ago with my local council and it is now a French Museum.

Glass is a bit like photography, it is all about light. When there is no light, nothing works, but during this trip, it was everywhere!

The two collectors, who were also the first people I met in the Vendée, gave me a very warm welcome. The beauty of the art works helped me to appreciate and, of course, in this region where light seems to emanate everywhere – the ponds, mudflats and canals leading to the sea. It seemed that even the animal sounds were part of the welcome I received.

As the sun was setting, thousands of tinyand perfectly invisible frogs sang like birds in the garden hedges where they had made their home, in the property I had rented. During these three days, I alternated between appointments for the museum and taking photographs. I was able to take one photo after another, without being hindered in any way by grey or dull skies that my Normandy so often imposes on photographers.

The fantastic and ever-present nature have been part of my work since 1971.

When I look at one of my untouched images in the lab or on my computer, I become totally absorbed by it and the moment comes when it takes on a new meaning for me. What “must” be added, transformed, or removed is obvious. There are no specific rules or methods that I can describe, and I don’t know how to explain this. But I did compose these images using the lighting conditions in the Vendée. The trees making dazzling flowers that welcome ducks arriving from Brittany, star fishermen’s “square dip nets” that only come out at night. In my imagination, the Vendée is a place where I can see and feel the world, where landscapes invent dimensions and create strange perspectives or light. Where I can correct the water levels on the boats and of course, where the horse from the island of Noirmoutier, can traverse the mirrors with me.

4. From then until now, these enthusiasts bring history to life

4.1. Personalities from all walks of life



Fascinating and passionate, **Jean Guy Bluteau**, known as Mr. Marais Poitevin. In love with his region, he enjoys sharing the richness of his marsh and organises events throughout the year to help visitors discover it. He offers a variety of guided tours to explore its heritage and “petit patrimoine”. He also reads tales and stories explaining local farming traditions and organises evening events on the Bay. Thanks to this outstanding guide, the Vendée is truly amazing.



For **Christian Chabirand**, the Vendée is a land of vines. Inspired by oenology, he thinks of wine and gastronomy as an art that it is important to promote. Based on this philosophy, he planted his first vines in 1997 in Vix and created an ECOCERT certified wine called Le Prieure la Chaume, before inaugurating an open-air theatre in the heart of the vineyards. This is where the summer festival “Les Arts par Nature” is held. An orangery also completes this unique project of artistic and cultural wine tourism, which promotes the area and tells its story in an original way.



The Logis de la Chevalerie in Sainte Gemme la Plaine is one of twelve « Logis de Vendée » and is listed as a historic monument. In 2004, when the current owners, **Pascal and Eugénie Maison** arrived, the Chevalerie looked as if it was “asleep”: overgrown gardens, rubble in every building, others were on the verge of collapsing and the roofs were propped up. Since then, the Logis has been completely renovated. We can now discover the 18th century “Jardins des Réguliers” and are plunged into the world of the Templar Knights Commandery (a small administrative division of the European landed properties of a military order) which once stood on this site.

To discover Fontenay Le Comte, the only Town of Art and History in the Vendée, **Marie-Gabrielle Giroire** is a perfect and invaluable guide. Her calling to become a professional guide was prompted in her youth during a trip, after which she abandoned her language studies and change to the History of Art faculty. Her aim was to “pass on her knowledge through artistic creation”. Since 2003, she has been organising thematic tours, musical walks, and children’s workshops – in what she considers to be “the most beautiful town in the Vendée”.



Yanis Suire is the director of the Centre Vendéen de Recherches Historiques (historical research centre), also presents himself as the “guardian” of the Marsh heritage. Born in Vix, he graduated from the Ecole des Chartes with a degree and obtained a doctorate in History, with two remarkable thesis on the History of the Marais Poitevin from Henry IV to 1914. Proud of his family origins and the history of the Marais Poitevin, he tells the story in six fascinating books published by the CVRH.



Alain Durante, originally from Nice, fell under the charms of the Vendée and decided to settle here in 1997. He took on the challenge of creating a garden at the Logis de Chaligny, respecting the tradition of a 16th century Vendean residence. Ten years later, it was listed as a Remarkable Garden. Since then, its creator has been organising visits, shows and concerts enabling visitors to discover this extraordinary garden.



4.2 Guided tours

Initiatives with History's interest at heart

To understand history, the best way is to (re) experience it.

The Mairie de L'île d'Yeu's heritage department offers guided tours around the megalithic sites entitled "**Prehistory and archaeology**". On the programme, the discovery of the dolmens, the small fradets and the "La Planche" dolmen at Puare, the cup stones (engraved stones) and the menhirs.



To appreciate the true impact of our ancestors, take a stroll through **the Neolithic sites** discovered in Olonne at Les Caltières and in Sainte Mathurin "La Chevetelière". Although these archaeological sites are protected and inaccessible to the public, in the centre of Olonne, 160 medieval tombs rest in peace and fill the surrounding area with an unusual atmosphere. In 2019, during the development of a salt march in Ile d'Olonne, workers discovered a pirogue, dating back more than 1000 years. Until the Middle Ages, the Vendéans travelled by canoe on the Vertonne ancient river bed as well as the old lagoon, which at that time was not filled in, or fully developed as a marsh.

In Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, a visit with a small group enables curious visitors to discover **the different aspects of the town and its progression**. There is a wealth of treasures from the past and the present to be unearthed.

A guided tour entitled « **Littoral et architecture balnéaire** » explores the history and evolution of the wild coastline of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie and Saint Hilaire de Riez. The tour focuses on the geology, flora, seaside architecture and all the charms of the coastline.



In the Vendean Bocage, the BRAHAM (Mortagne-sur-Sèvre Office of Architectural and Historical Research) is an association whose mission is to protect and enhance the local heritage. In 2021, it contributed to the restoration of the old Orangery, which is now a venue for historical exhibitions. Its members organise numerous **guided tours as well as exhibitions and events** that bring heritage to life and sometimes even draw it to the public's attention. In November 2020, for example, archaeological excavations in Évrunes revealed traces of a cemetery. The Vendée has not finished revealing its secrets.

5. The towns and villages with a rich heritage

5.1 Towns with remarkable architecture

The «**Petites Cités de Caractère**» distinction is awarded to small French towns and villages with a remarkable architectural and natural heritage. Thanks to the quality and beauty of the Vendée's heritage, eight towns in the region have been awarded this distinction. Among them, **Apremont** and **Foussais Payré** are a mixture of the Gallo-Roman and Renaissance periods. **Mallièvre** is an ancient weaving village. **Mouchamps** is the birthplace of the Clemenceau family. **Pouzauges** and **Vouvant** are ancient medieval fortified towns. **Faymoreau** is a reminder of the mining era in the Vendée. **Nieul sur l'Autise** bears witness to the influence of abbeys and monastic architecture.



www.vendee-tourisme.com/inspirez-moi/culture-et-patrimoine/les-petites-cites-de-caractere



Fontenay le Comte a “Town of Art and History” reflects the golden age of the Renaissance with its remarkable 16th century facades. Nicknamed the “fountain of beautiful minds” by King Francois I, several walks allow you to discover its beauty. The Transfontenaysienne is a 7 km circuit that takes travellers through the only conservation area in the Vendée. Whereas “L'étrange balade de Fontenay” (“Fontenay's Strange Walk”) offers a walk following in the footsteps of the “Fontenautes”. The 42 heritage panels also describe the rich historical quarters of the town.



www.fontenay-vendee-tourisme.com/pratique/nos-25-communes/fontenay-le-comte-et-alentours/fontenay-le-comte



In the Bas-Poitou, **Luçon** has been an ecclesiastical capital since 1317. The Sainte Thérèse chapel, the Ursulines chapel and the Carmel chapel, as well as the Notre Dame Cathedral with its cloisters all reflect the culture and history of the town. Two paths the “clouté” and “baludik” allow you to discover the old port, the fishermen's quarter, a water tower whose architecture is unique in the world. And not forgetting the Jardin Dumaine with its hundred-year-old yew trees and ornate lawns.



www.lucon.fr/office-de-tourisme-sud-vendee-littoral/



La Roche sur Yon or Napoleon Ville
Cf. page 19.

5.2 Charming villages



On the island of Noirmoutier, even though it does not have the distinction of «Petites Cités de Caractère», **Le Vieil** is full of charm and tranquillity. In this former fishermen's village, you can walk or cycle through its narrow streets lined with low stone walls and admire the pretty white cabins on the beach. Furthermore, the Mardi Gras beach was the setting from which, in 1832 the first French submarine was presented to the government by Brutus Villeroy, then a teacher in Noirmoutier. Then, in 1972, the film "César et Rosalie" brought together the legendary duo, Romy Schneider-Yves Montand, together with Samy Frey and Isabelle Huppert.



www.ile-noirmoutier.com/fr/le-village-du-vieil.html



In the Saint Gilles Croix de Vie area, **La Chaize-Giraud** is the former headquarters for the "Lords of Giraud", surrounded by nature and tranquillity. The narrow streets and alleys have been completely restored, giving an authentic character back to the village. The Romanesque church in the heart of the town is a listed building and has a beautiful 12th century Poitevin façade. The former priory is now the town hall, and hosts an arts and crafts market on Friday evening during the summer. Throughout the year it is possible to meet the artists in "Les Ateliers du Pressoir". The banks of Le Jaunay lake allow visitors to discover the local flora and fauna, while the 5 km heritage trail invites hikers to step back in time and retrace the history of this small town.



www.payssaintgilles-tourisme.fr/destination/nos-destinations/la-chaize-giraud



With only 250 inhabitants, the village of **La Chapelle aux Lys** is a journey through the heavens and time. Following the installation of sundials and a "chemin aux étoiles" (path to the stars), where one metre is the equivalent to three million years, the village is now recognised as a 4-star "Village étoile" (Stargazing village). So, it was only natural that, Olivier Sauzereau, Astro photographer and historian, should set up his telescope in the village to observe the Milky Way. Amazed by the quality of the night sky, the specialist created an observatory as well as the Astrolys festival. The purpose of this festival is to let everyone have their heads in the stars



www.astrolys.fr

6. Arts and crafts and the Vendean savoir-faire

6.1 Perpetuating traditions

The Vendée is a fertile region that gives back to those who look after it. **Pépinières Ripaud** in Cheffois created more than 60 years ago, is one of the biggest nurseries in France. This family business is a fore runner in topiary art (the art of trimming hedges into various shapes) and top-of-the-range horticulture. In total, more than 2 million trees and shrubs from the five continents are planted here and offer an unforgettable spectacle. A family name, an extraordinary and a rare “savoir-faire” that is passed on, is in perfect harmony with mother earth.



www.ripaudpepinieres.com



In Vix, the **Mercier Group** is France's leading vine nursery and ranks among the world's top ten. Since 1890, some of the best vine plants have been cultivated here, coming from fifty different varieties. These Vendean plants known for their exceptional quality, rewarded by numerous certification labels, are then sold to wine professionals. Around sixty percent of production is reserved for the French market, creating exceptional 100% “French wines”.



www.mercier-groupe.com

In 2020, the Lunéville stitch, beaded and sequined embroidery was recognised as part of UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage (it consists of nonphysical intellectual wealth such as folklore, beliefs, customs, traditions, knowledge, and language). As far as “**haute couture**” embroidery is concerned, Claire Liotta is a specialist working in La Châtaigneraie since 1998, in her workshop ‘**Les Beaux-Arts du Fil**’. She organises traditional embroidery courses in her workshop and in 2004 opened a school to pass on her meticulous “savoir-faire” with future generations.



www.lesbeauxartsdufil-85.com



Michel Charrier, a former carpenter, has been a saddler and harness maker at the Haras de la Roche sur Yon since 1986. This is the leather “Haute-Couture » for horse lovers. This man has the power to work miracles with only a needle and thread. In 1994, he became one of the “Meilleurs ouvriers de France” or MOF (a unique and prestigious award based on different categories of trade in a contest among professionals) for saddlery and harnessing leatherwork. Today, Michel is also the only instructor for this trade in France and people come from all over France to study with him.

6.2 Art and crafts from the Vendée

Sallertaine, located in the heart of the Breton Marshes and has been awarded the “**Ville & Métiers d’Art**” label. Strolling through its pretty little streets, you will discover around forty craftsmen who are very attached to their art and to nature. They demonstrate their trade under the watchful eyes of curious onlookers. All the different crafts are represented: hand-blown glass, ceramics and porcelain, jewellery made from precious metals and natural materials, embroidery, lace, leatherwork, woodwork, modelling, enamel, lacquer ware, decorative and silk painting, ruka ware (a type of Japanese pottery), stained glass works... Some craftsmen work all year round and offer introductory workshops on their craft. Others are only present during the season. Various spectacles and events such as the “**Nocturnes de Sallertaine**” (The Evenings at Sallertaine) and “**La Fête des Lumières**” (the festival of lights) are well worth the trip.



www.lileauxartisans.fr



After years working in Thiers, the French capital of knives, **Thomas Fleury** settled in Les Sables d’Olonne, in La Chaume area. A true craftsman, he makes “**SNARD**” or knives in the local dialect. In his workshop everything is possible. From utility knives for amateur yachtsmen to pocketknives for fishermen or the “**couteau bijoux**” (traditional folding pocket-knife) made of burr wood, ram’s horn, camel bone, mother-of-pearl, resin, or cork.... cutlery holds no secrets for him.



www.snard.fr



In 2021, the painter **Arno Rocher** opened his gallery-studio in the main street of the Ile de Noirmoutier. Thanks to a mixture of acrylic, oil paint and cement, this archaeologist superimposes different layers, recovers, erases and scratches the different coats to give life to the History of the Vendée. “I work from memory, a relation with time”.



The Vendée has a very special know-how that craftsmen use every day to keep traditions alive. Since 1936, in the Saint Gilles region, **the small family company Nistar** has been the specialist in earthenware. The company is best known for its famous 100 % French name bowls, which can be found in many regional souvenir shops. The bowls are hand-made and painted in the Vendean workshop. A perfect gift to bring back to your loved ones. They come in a variety of designs, different materials and various prices. They will delight young and old alike.



www.lebolfrançais.com



La coutellerie du Marais, situated in Saint Pierre Le Vieux, is the workshop where Manu forges handcrafted knives. Following his training as a bladesmith in the Haute Marne in 1992, he moved to Souil in the Vendée. The artist makes forged and folding knives as well as tableware, forged animals, sculptures, and other ironwork. Training courses and demonstrations are given directly in the workshop to introduce visitors to this art.



www.laforgeamanu.fr



6.3 A unique style



For an elegant and modern outing, a visit to Fontenay le Comte is more than recommended. Since 1834, Wilfried Guilment of Partson **Chapellerie Dandurand & Fils group** has been making: hats, caps, and various head ware. Their products are well-known and exported throughout the world. A genuine, authentic skill is portrayed by this wonderful local company, which holds the Entreprise du Patrimoine certification – (The EPV or Living Heritage Enterprise certification, is a qualification to distinguish French companies who have an exceptional artisanal expertise and industrial expertise).



www.groupe-partson.com/fr/chapellerie-dandurand



Since 2009, Olympe and Lucas have been continuing a family tradition with **Le Ceinturier**. Inspired by the board sports and with a philosophy of « consuming less, consuming better », they use traditional methods combined with the latest technologies, to create high quality belts and leather goods with the best and most natural materials. This 100% Made in France workshop uses vegetable-tanned and full-grain leathers. The result, is a respectful fashion that reflects the beauty of the Atlantic coast.



www.ceinturier.com



In 1803, in Les Sables d'Olonne, Mr YOU opened his clog making company. A few years later, he met Madame YOU, whose love story gave birth to the **YOUYOU** brand. A true institution in the Vendée, the mythical and original Sablais clogs are back in fashion thanks to Charlotte Durand, the new manager and artistic director of YOUYOU. She has added new models in keeping with the latest trends. The quality of the wooden sole, the leather and the manufacturing process is outstanding and environmentally friendly.



www.sabotyoyou.com



To finish off an outfit in style, **Marc Arnaud Pavagneu** is an artisan jeweller and designer based in Les Sables d'Olonne, who offers an exceptional jewellery. After more than ten years working for the famous names of the Place Vendôme in Paris, he now makes bracelets, necklaces, and watches. He also uses gemmology for flawless creations that preserve “the expertise of our noble French traditions”.



www.joallerie-pavagneau.com/



6.4 Local cosmetics



Located in Les Epesses, the **Savonnerie des collines** is a delight for the senses. The soaps are made from donkey's milk and goat's milk and respect all skin types. These products are made in an environmentally friendly way. During a trip to the Vendée, visitors may visit the soap production workshop by using the interactive tour "Once upon a time, there was soap". This is a fun family activity for discovering soap through the ages. And finally, you can take some home and spoil yourself.



www.savonneriedescollines.com/



La Maison Royer is well known in the Vendée for the quality of its snail farming. The snails are farmed in an organic and ethical way, which gives these gastropods their unique flavour. In addition to preparing them for use in our meals, Royer also uses snail slime for cosmetic purposes. It helps to repair, heal, moisture and protect the skin. It can be used on its own as a face serum or with other ingredients such as organic karite butter or coconut oil to pamper the skin.



www.maisonroyer.fr



The **Maison Sidonie Champagne** de Benet was founded in 2012. Sidonie is self-taught women, who began her career in saponification (soap making) after working as an interior decorator and in admin. Today, the company is growing and conquering the hearts of the Vendéans, thanks to the use of traditional methods. It produces cold-saponified cosmetics, perfumes, and soaps, with beautiful fragrances that are perfect for any occasion.



www.maison-sidonie-champagne.fr/



7. The Cultural Calendar

7.1 Major Cultural events

PRINTEMPS DU LIVRE in Montaigu-Vendée
1st, 2nd & 3rd April
printempsdulivre.terresdemontaigu.fr

KID'S FOLIES in Saint Jean de Monts
From 10th April to 6th May
www.kidsfolies.fr

FESTIVAL DU POLAR in la Tranche sur Mer
16th & 17th April
www.latranchesurmer-tourisme.fr

FESTIVAL DE TERRE NEUVE in Fontenay le Comte
18th to 24th June
vendee-tourisme.com

EXPOSITION « SUR LA PISTE D'OSIRIS » at l'Historial de la Vendée in Lucs sur Boulogne
From 6th May to 4th September
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Historial-de-Vendee

FESTIVAL SIMENON in Les Sables d'Olonne
13th & 14th May 2022
www.festival-simenon-sablesolonne.com

FESTIVAL DES VOÛTES CÉLESTES – Abbaye de Maillezais, Abbaye de Nieul & Prieuré de Grammont in Saint Prouant
From 17th May to 17th June
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

VENDEE VA'A, la culture polynésienne in Sables d'Olonne
From 25th to 28th May 2022
www.vendeevaa.com

LA 7ème VAGUE in Brétignolles sur Mer
From 26th, 27th & 28th May
www.7vague.com

LA DÉFERLANTE DE PRINTEMPS In towns in the Vendée
Ascension Weekend: from 26th to 29th May
www.ladeferlante.com

VILLAGE VENDEE ARCTIQUE in Sables d'Olonne
From 2nd to 26th June (race departs 12th June)
www.vendeearctique.org

FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE BAROQUE « HUGO REYNE » in Sables d'Olonne
From 3rd to 5th June
www.lessablesdolonne.fr

FÊTE DES FLEURS in l'Île d'Yeu
5th June
www.fetedesfleurs.yeu.free.fr

VENDEE CŒUR in Sables d'Olonne
18th & 19th June
2022.vendeecoeur.fr

LA BRETAGNE À LA CHABOTTERIE at Logis de la Chabotterie in Montréverd
25th June
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr/Logis-de-la-Chabotterie

FESTIVAL DE POUPET in Saint Malo du Bois
From 28th June to 22nd July
www.festival-poupet.com

FESTIVAL LES RICOCHETS in Pays de Fontenay le Comte
July
www.fontenay-vendee-tourisme.com

FESTIVAL R.POP in the Haras de la Roche sur Yon
Summer
www.festival-rpop.fr

LES NUITS MUSICALES EN VENDÉE ROMANE
In the Petites Cités de Caractère of the Vendée
Summer
www.festival-vendee.com

LA DÉFERLANTE D'ÉTÉ
In numerous towns in the Vendée
Summer
www.ladeferlante.com

FESTIVAL SOUFFLEUR D'ARUNDEL in Sables d'Olonne
Summer
www.lesouffleurdarundel.fr

FESTIVAL LES JAUNAY-STIVALES in Pays des Achards
Summer
www.achards-tourisme.com

FESTIVAL À TOUT VENT in Pays de Saint Jean de Monts
From 1st to 4th July
www.festivalatoutvent.fr

FESTIVAL AU SON DE L'YON at Moulin de Rambourg (Pays Yonnais)
4th, 11th, 18th & 25th August 2022
www.destination-laroquesuryon.fr

RÉVEILLONS-NOUS DANS DES LIEUX INSOLITES in Pays de Saint Jean de Monts
From 9th to 17th July
<https://festivalreveillonsnous.com>

CONCERTS MUSIQUES at Logis de la Chabotterie – Montréverd
From 12th July to 2nd August
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

FESTIVAL LES ARTS PAR NATURE at Prieuré La Chaume in Vix
From 15th July to 15th August
<https://festival-les-arts-par-nature.fr>

CONCERTS VOIX ET MUSIQUES at Prieuré de Grammont
in Saint Prouant
From 18th July to 15th July
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

CONCERTS – OPÉRAS at l'Abbaye de Nieul sur l'Autise
21st & 28th July, & 4th, 11th & 18th August
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

AUTREFOIS CHALLANS
21st & 28th July & 11th & 18th August
www.autrefoischallans.com

FESTIVAL LES MARAIS MONTANTS at l'Abbaye de Maillezaïs & in Mazeau
22nd, 23rd & 24th July
www.maraismontants.fr

LES NUITS DE LA TOUR à Angles
22nd – 23rd – 26th – 27th – 29th – 30th July
<https://lesnuitsdelatour.fr>

FESTIVAL ULTRASON in Pays de Saint Jean de Monts
From 27th to 29th July
<https://paysdesaintjeandemonts.fr>

UNITY FESTIVAL in Sables d'Olonne
From 29th to 31st July
<https://unityfestival.fr>

LES NOCTURNES MÉDIÉVALES in Bazoges en Pareds
30th July & 6th August
www.sudvendeeetourisme.com

FESTIVAL VAGUE DE JAZZ in Sables d'Olonne
End of July
www.vaguedejazz.com

VIENS DANS MON ÎLE in l'Île d'Yeu
1st, 3rd & 5th August
viens-dans-mon-ile.com

FESTIVAL AU SON DE L'YON
in the Moulin de Rambourg
4th, 11th, 18th & 25th August (concerts gratuits)
www.destination-larochesuryon.fr

CHRISTMAS EVENTS

• **MARCHÉ DE NOËL** in Beaulieu sous La Roche
02nd, 03rd & 04th December
www.beaulieusouslaroche.fr

• **LA PARADE DE NOËL** (Christmas Parade) town centre- Les Herbiers
1st weekend of December (subject to modification)
www.lesherbiers.fr

• **FOIRE DE NOËL (Christmas Fair) IN MAILLEZAIS**
02nd, 03rd, 04th & the 09th, 10th & 11th December
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

• **MARCHÉ DE NOËL (Christmas market)**
AT THE CHATEAU DE TIFFAUGES-
les 02, 03 et 04 et les 09, 10 et 11/12
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

LES 20 ANS DU FESTIVAL LA BOUILLIE À SOSSO in Cheffois
5th & 6th August
www.labouillieasosso.fr

FESTIVAL DANS LES JARDINS DE WILLIAM CHRISTIE in Thiré
From 20th to 27th August
www.arts-florissants.org/festivaljardins-william-christie.html

SALON DU LIVRE VENDÉEN au Refuge de Grasla in Brouzils
27th & 28th August
www.lerefugedulivre.com

FESTIVAL FACE & SI in Mouilleron le Captif
From 2nd to 4th September
www.faceetsi.fr

GOLDEN GLOBE RACE in Sables d'Olonne
Departing 4th September
goldenglobelrace.com

CAVALCADES au Haras de la Vendée in La Roche sur Yon
11th September
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

LES MÉDIÉVALES at Château de Tiffauges
24th & 25th September
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

FESTIVAL L'AIR D'EN RIRE in Saint Denis la Chevasse
End of September / Beginning October
www.airdenrire.fr

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM in La Roche sur Yon
From 17th to 23rd October
fif-85.com

HISTOIRE(S) DE BD at l'Historial de la Vendée in Lucs sur Boulogne
22nd & 23rd October
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

FESTIVAL LES NUITS COURTES in Fontenay le Comte
From 28th to 30th October
www.lesnuitscourtes.com

• **FESTIVAL DE CHOEURS D'ENFANTS** (Children's choir festival) - Abbaye de Nieul sur l'Autise Rives d'Autise
16th, 17th & 18th December
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

• **FESTIVAL JEUNE PUBLIC** (Children's festival) at Logis de la Chabotterie Montréverd
17th & 18th December
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

• **NOËL (Christmas Events) AU HARAS DE LA VENDÉE-**
La Roche sur Yon
From 17th to 31st December
www.sitesculturels.vendee.fr

7.2 Portraits of festival and cultural event organisers

FESTIVALS AND PERENNIAL EVENTS IN THE VENDÉE



1 - Guillaume Jean, Vice-President of the County Council, President for Cultural Commission,

Since 2012, every summer, Les Arts Florissants and the Vendée County Council have joined forces to offer a unique festival event- Le Festival dans les Jardins de William Christie (in William Christie's Garden): what are the County Council's objectives?

The County Council's cultural requirements include the development and

promotion of events whose reputation is already well established. Every year, the Vendée organises and supports various events that make it stand out within and beyond the region. A symbol of this strong cultural identity, Dans les Jardins de William Christie festival, offers a wonderful opportunity to discover the most beautiful baroque works in an exceptional setting.

This festival has been around for many years. This summer we will celebrate its tenth anniversary. What makes this event so successful ?

This festival is a unique event in Europe. A sophisticated blend of baroque music and garden art. These musical encounters enable the public to experience, at very affordable prices, exceptional concerts performed by talented young artists and professional musicians. These concerts are directed by William Christie, an internationally renowned conductor.

2 - Philippe Maindron – Organiser of the Festival de Poupet

Why did you create the Festival de Poupet? What was your initial motivation? And why in this beautiful green environment in Saint Malo du Bois?

This adventure started 35 years ago, during the village festival “La fête du moulin” in Saint Malo du Bois (my wife Christiane's native village). There was no premeditation; the project was not to create a national event, but simply a party among friends, so I could fit in better. In the beginning, we

had a programme with local artists, then regional, then national and finally international. We have always kept the same historic venue, namely La Prairie (an open-air site) in Poupet, on the banks of the Sèvre. This was where the first “fête du moulin” Festival took place.

This festival has existed for many years. You are celebrating its 35th edition in 2022. What makes it so successful ?

I would say that its success is due to 3 main reasons. Firstly, the festival has always kept its soul with a very selective programme, which touches all audiences. Secondly, the magic of the site itself, this natural green setting, allows us to remain close to the artists. And finally, the great enthusiasm that surrounds this event! It is a magical and alchemical event. In the association, we have remained a group of friends and our motto is “serious without being serious”.

Do you have any other project related to Culture and Heritage?

In 2022, we are launching an extension to the festival, beyond the main venue, “les envolées de Poupet”. The idea is to reach out to a new audience, with smaller venues for more private events such as prisons or for people with disabilities. We want to meet all kinds of people, in different places and to suit all budgets. The “envolées de poupet” will take place all year round, outside the Poupet festival period. To be continued.... Philippe will reveal the details in the coming months.





3 - Pascal Marteau, President for the 4 cultural seasons (FACE&SI Festival)

Why did you create the Face&Si Festival? What was your primary motivation? And why in Mouilleron le Captif ?

The idea of creating the Face&Si Festival in Mouilleron-le-Captif came from Philippe Darniche, founding father and the Mayor of the town. The first edition took place in 1998, when few festivals existed in the Vendée.

•To create this with the inhabitants of Mouilleron, a collective event, combining the cultural aspects of music, comedy, and the performing arts. This event is open

to all, young and old alike, from the area around the Yon valley, the Vendée and further afield.

- Promoting an access to culture at reasonable prices.
- Targeting a family audience.

As the community initiated and supported this project, it was not intended to hold the festival anywhere other than Mouilleron-le-Captif. From the outset, we had a site that was ideal for the event, right in the town centre, with easy access. Since 2014, we have transferred the festival to the magnificent Beaupuy Park, allowing us to give it another dimension.

Founded in 1998, this festival has been around for many years. What makes it so successful?

The essence of Face&Si is festive and family oriented. The wide range of programmes at affordable prices encourages all age groups to meet, discover and contribute to the friendly spirit of the festival. We owe its success to:

- The support and trust of our many private and institutional partners who have supported us for each edition over the years;
- The 600 volunteers who have been involved for 23 years, ensuring a quality welcome for all the festival-goers;
- The quality of the site where the festival takes place and its now well-established organisation;
- The atypical venues available on-site: the wine bar, a children's wooden games area, furniture created by volunteers during a wood workshop....

Each year in September, Facs&Si has become the most important event, offering people the opportunity to get together after the holidays. They can have a great time and reminisce about their favourite memories.

Can't wait for the 2022 edition on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of September!

4 – Renaud Loizeau – Organiser of the Festival Le Souffleur d'Arundel in Les Sables d'Olonne

What was your principal motivation?

By creating Le Souffleur d'Arundel, our primary motivation was to promote ARTISTIC CREATION through music and comedy. This was achieved in a festive, family orientated, and original atmosphere. A people-friendly festival with a human touch.



And why the Arundel Tower?

The choice of the Arundel Tower was an obvious one; to make the old tower's stones echoes with modern sounds! There is something magical about this place when laughter ricochets around the walls. All the artists remember this place, because of its beauty and its emotional atmosphere. The spectators, who, despite the wind (which is frequently present) as well as the crying seagulls, have also adopted it. The tower has become our "lighthouse", our guide during all these years spent close by.

This festival has existed for many years. What makes it so successful?

The success of the festival has grown over the years. The public has come in ever increasing numbers, thanks to the word of mouth! The friendly atmosphere and the chance to meet the artists made the festival a success. The public quickly understood that they would meet up-and-coming artists! Our audience's main interest is to come and applaud artists who will be the stars of tomorrow...to be the first to support them! And, as I have said, I don't forget this magical and very unique place!



4– Nicolas de Villiers – President of the Puy du Fou® and the Cinéscénie

Why and how was the Cinéscénie created? And why in this place?

Forty-five years ago, my father, Philippe de Villiers, was searching for a place to stage a tribute to his happy childhood and the history of the Vendée. Before starting to write the script, he wanted to find a place that would inspire him, to fulfil his dream.

After having explored the Vendean (Bocage) countryside, he discovers a strange castle, abandoned to brambles, in Les Epesses called Puy du Fou. It was love at first sight! The painful ruins of this Renaissance castle, burnt down by the Infernal columns (military operations led by the French Revolutionary

General Turreau during the Vendée Wars, the goal of which was to exterminate the “brigands” in the so called Vendée), inspired him. With no money, no experience, no technicians and no support, this 28-year-old young man embarked on a crazy gamble. He wrote the script with great commitment. One by one he convinced the first volunteers, coordinated the preliminary work, and directed the rehearsals. This poem of light was to become the Cinéscénie.

The first Cinéscénie was performed on the 16th of June 1978 by 600 Puyfolais (the name given to its volunteer actors). This spectacular night-time show tells the story of the Maupillier family, from the Middle Ages to the Second World War. The Puy du Fou association needed to welcome 35,000 spectators to cover its expenses, but more than 80,000 spectators came to admire the Cinéscénie during its first season. The artistic success was immediate, and the Puy du Fou adventure began. No one could yet imagine where its path would lead.

For 45 years, more than 13 million spectators have attended the Puy du Fou’s Cinéscénie. Today, there are 4,400 Puyfolais volunteers, 2,500 of whom perform every evening on the world’s largest stage. The Puy du Fou has now become an internationally recognised, artistic phenomenon awarded for its exceptional quality and originality. The strange name of this forgotten castle is known throughout the world.

The Cinéscénie was born in 1977, what makes it so successful today? What makes it different from all the other “son et Lumière” shows?

From the outset, Philippe de Villiers invented the word “Cinéscénie” to name the work he was creating. Far from the classic “sound and light” shows, the Cinéscénie is unique in the world.

It embodies a new form of artistic expression combining opera, theatre, and cinema, which impresses by its lavishness. The figures speak for themselves: 4,400 Puyfolais volunteers, 2,500 actors on stage, a 23-hectare stage, 230 horses, 150 water jets, 8,000 projectors, 800 fireworks....as well as all the latest technologies (drones, 3D mapping...)

But above all, the Cinéscénie makes an impression because it touches people’s hearts. Behind this spectacular show, the spectators discover a dramatic and poetic work of art that provokes deep emotions. It is unimaginable, it is an experience. Through the Vendée’s history, a miniature version of France’s history, the Cinéscénie speaks to the soul, the most personal part of each spectator, to give hope. It transforms the drama into a new opportunity. It is therefore no longer just a show, it is a moment suspended between heaven and earth, between immensity and intimacy. A poetic dialogue between the actors and spectators who, by the end of the story, form a common people.

Finally, the Cinéscénie is a generous venture which relies on the selfless commitment of 4,400 Puyfolais volunteers. On stage, or backstage and in the different services, the Puyfolais bring this unique adventure to life, forging the soul and spirit of the Puy du Fou.

5 - Jean-Marie Fonteneau, President of the Autrefois Challans association – 21st & 28th July, 11th & 18th August

What do you think was the primary incentive for creating this event?

The primary motivation was to revive the poultry market of bygone years, which had made the town famous, and to bring the town centre to life during the summer months, showing tourists the local business spirit.

“Autrefois Challans” has existed for many years. What makes it a success today?

The investment of the volunteers is undoubtedly the key to the success of “Autrefois Challans”. They enjoy talking to visitors, sharing the customs and traditions of this North-Western region of the Vendée. They promote the region which is so rich in history. Every summer, “Autrefois Challans” offers a step back in time to the beginning of the 20th century, where visitors love experiencing the atmosphere of the past.



THE RETURN OF CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE VENDÉE



1/ Pierre-Antoine OURY – Festival OZE in Fontenay le Comte

1/ Why did you create this music festival? What was your initial idea? And why in Fontenay le Comte ?

The singular nature of opera itself is a real incentive. Sometimes unknowingly present in each of us, thanks to the cinema, television, or even major sporting events, it is a means of bringing people together. It reaches across all age groups and all social backgrounds. The desire to create OZE was also influenced by the region. Fontenay-le-Comte is a real Vendean treasure trove, a destination with a rich historical past whose legacy is the best example.

The town's architectural style, provides inspiration and motivation for all forms of artistic expression, including opera. Bringing this art outdoors, in front of an iconic building such as Usine Étoile, makes it less intimidating and can even be spectacular. This building, designed by Georges Mathieu, the renowned Master of Lyrical Abstraction (two distinct trends in Post-war Modernist painting), celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2022. It is very exciting to celebrate this with music and to highlight its facades in colour!

2/ Created recently this festival is still quite young. In your opinion, what will make it successful?

The long-term success of such a project will depend upon whether the performances are accessible, popular and of high-quality. If the OZE has a mission, it is to take the mystery out of opera, in the best way. To make an opera evening, a theatre of shared emotions, relaxation, and encounters. As with certain German or French festivals, that offer a classical experience in a friendly context. Whether it's in the front row or sitting on the grass, for the young or old, with friends or the family, the aim is to attract an audience of opera lovers. And of course, people who are not familiar with opera.

Success will also be possible thanks to the enthusiasm of our business partners. They are essential in the construction of such a programme; today's sponsors have understood this very well. Making the region more attractive means more jobs, more economic development, and more tourism. It is very important to mention the public institutions (at local and regional levels) which, through their financial support, give credibility to this project and promote it.

Finally, the objective of the OZE is also to bring together local talent (conservatory and music school, Les Sables d'Olonne Orchestra....) with world renowned talent. Bringing together all the regional creative forces is to optimise membership; it is to see Vendean children's choirs alongside accomplished tenors. What a show! Above all else, OZE is an extravaganza rather than a festival...Only time will tell.

2 – Julien & Valentin – Musical Festival UNITY from 29th to 31st July 2022

Why did you create this music festival? What was your primary motivation? And why in Les Sables d'Olonne ?

In early 2020, cultural activities were put on standby due to the global pandemic: COVID-19. This period, which has been lonely for some and lacking in entertainment for others, has allowed many people to take the time to think, to create and to come up with new projects.



As one of the first to miss this French musical culture and needing to see things in a positive light. We, therefore decided to look into creating an annual flagship event for Les Sables d'Olonne and brought people together to create a team. From that moment, a music festival was born. Initially without a name, it became obvious to call it Unity, at a time when everyone was separated.

Les Sables d'Olonne was a logical choice, as we are closely attached to the town and live there. This decision was also made due to the lack of musical events in Les Sables.

What do you think will make it successful?

Our team likes the idea that a festival's success is not based on the number of years it has existed, but rather on the choice of its programme, based on the public it targets. This is where the name Unity comes into its own: to offer an eclectic programme that appeals to all generations.

In addition, we wanted to offer special prices ranging from 39€ to 45€, an access for one-day of the festival. We offer tickets to see one concert, but in actual fact, spectators can see four – this is one of our assets!



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