

FOCUS TOURS THE CASTLE



VILLES
& PAYS
D'ART &
D'HISTOIRE



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Celebrated city of the Loire Valley, Tours could not have embraced such a destiny without a castle worthy of the name. An emblematic and major building, it rests on a highly significant site: that of the first human occupations following the foundation of the ancient city.

Facing the Loire and its successive bridges, the castle and the town's unfailing link with the river was made manifest thanks to the fortifications which united them. Theatre of great events of the history of France, the royal castle was turned into barracks after the fall of the Ancien Régime. It thus anticipated the military presence in Tours, which became an important garrison town in the 19th century.

In the following century, its use changed with the establishment of the Musée Grévin historial de Touraine and the aquarium de Touraine. A cultural venue open to all, it now hosts exhibitions as part of a prestigious partnership with the Musée du Jeu de Paume. The castle of Tours, enriched with centuries of history, highlights the past and current grandeur of our city.

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Engraving by Étienne Brion, late
18th century
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The Guise Tower seen from the
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The ancient rampart seen beneath the logis des Gouverneurs
© Ville de Tours



A SITE THAT HAS BEEN OCCUPIED SINCE ANTIQUITY

Tours Castle developed in the eastern sector of the city, on the edge of the Loire. It leans against the Gallo-Roman wall built in the middle of the fourth century to protect the ancient city of Caesarodunum. Several archaeological excavations campaigns in the 1970s revealed the existence of public and private buildings constructed one after another since the middle of the 1st century.

A PUBLIC BATHING ESTABLISHMENT (LATE 1ST CENTURY - EARLY 4TH CENTURY)

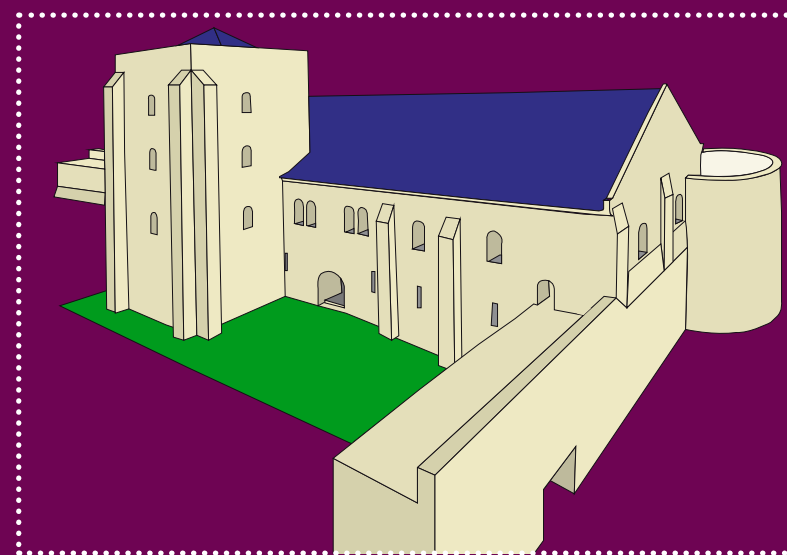
Over a period of more than two hundred years, the site housed public baths over an area of more than 2000 m². They presumably had direct access to the river bank. The excavations attest to a very large room on a hypocaust (an underfloor heating system used in the Roman baths) of more than ten metres in length.

THE GALLO-ROMAN ENCLOSURE (4TH CENTURY)

The use of the baths stopped around 300 at the time the northwest corner of the rampart was being constructed. The compound wall has foundations of 3 to 5 metres made of large blocks of reused limestone ; a large base, from 4.20 to 4.50 metres in width ; and an elevation consisting of two facing walls (small limestone rubble bonded to the pink mortar and tile beds) with a stone and mortar obstruction between them.

In this section of the rampart, you can also recognise a postern in the north outer wall and a tower on the northwest corner. Overall, it forms a very neat construction which appears to have been completed towards 350-375.

At the same time, the rehabilitation of some seaside buildings made it possible to restore the thermal function of the site for fifty years.



Impression of what the castle looked like in the 11th century
© Laboratoire d'archéologie urbaine de Tours

Finally, in the 5th century the buildings were converted into dwellings. Archaeology attests to successive wooden constructions and the presence of pits for dumping trash that persisted until the 11th century.

A SEAT OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE MIDDLE AGES

THE COUNTY RESIDENCE

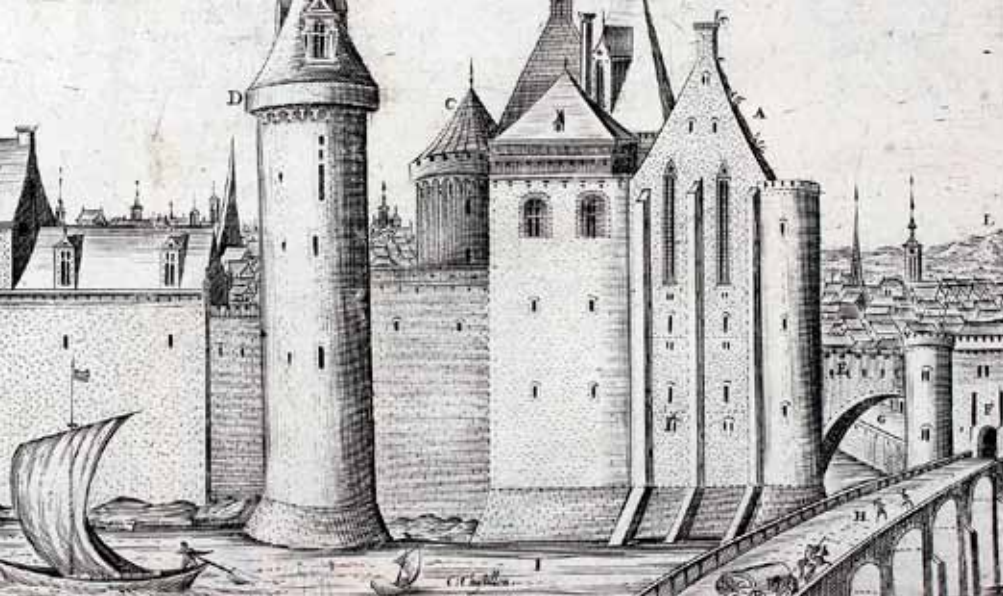
The counts of Blois have governed the city since the 9th century. In 1034, Count Eudes II built a bridge across the Loire. It was located a few metres downriver from the current Pont de Fil.

Ten years later, Touraine fell into the hands of the Counts of Anjou and Geoffroy II Martel (1044-1060) built a

county residence on the northwestern wall of the fortification of the Low Empire, facing the Eudes Bridge.

The monumental complex consists of a large quadrangular building 28 metres long and 8 metres wide. It is surmounted by a floor and flanked by a 6 metres by 6 metres square dungeon in the southeast corner. On the second level is a large ceremonial room while the kitchens, storage areas and wells are on the ground floor. The three or four storeys of the dungeon were probably used as private apartments, a treasure room and a chapel.

This building clearly had no defensive function and, moreover, was not built to serve as the main residence of the Count, who lived in Angers. It was the provost, the Count's deputy, who occupied the residence to carry out his duties. The county residence represented the political and administrative power of the lord to whom the city owed allegiance.



The castle of the town of Tours, copper engraving taken from «Topographie Française» by Claude Chastillon, published between 1644 and 1648
© Bibliothèque municipale de Tours



Archaeological digs at the foot of the castle and restoration of the tower of Guise, 1968
© Archives municipales de Tours

THE ROYAL CASTLE

Faced with too much independence on the part of the lords and especially the Plantagenets, King Philip Augustus restored sovereign authority and undertook a policy of conquest. Touraine returned to the royal domain in 1214.

The construction of a castle on the site of the former county residence made it possible to assert the new royal power. Thus, between 1270 and 1280, under the reign of Philip III, a castle forming an irregular quadrilateral with four circular towers in the corners was built around the former residence of the count and his keep.

Of the original four towers, two still survive today at the north-east and south-east corners. The north tower is called Tour de Guise in reference to

the young Duke imprisoned inside who escaped on August 15, 1591. The pepperbox roofs covered in slate date from the late 18th century while the battlements were restored in the 19th century.

This new fortified castle, at the entrance of the medieval bridge, is part of the defensive facilities of the city which constituted La Clouaison, an urban enclosure that joined the two urban cores of the city (the City and Chateaneuf) from 1356.

The engagement of Charles VII and Marie d'Anjou was celebrated in the castle in 1413, as was the marriage of Louis XI to Margaret of Scotland in 1436.

At the end of the 15th century, the Tours castle was abandoned by kings who preferred the more prestigious

residences in the Loire Valley and Paris. It was then gradually dismantled in the late 18th century and its stones were used for the development of the banks of the Loire and the construction of the house of Mars (a barracks building between the two towers).

THE HOME OF THE GOVERNORS OF TOURAINE

Alongside the Loire, the Governors' house was built in the early 16th century overlooking the Gallo-Roman wall that it re-used. The north façade, which faces the river, is the most interesting one: its lower part is pierced by three low windows on a level with the ancient wall. The seven half-height windows illuminate the guardhouse

gallery, making it a prime location for monitoring river traffic and defending the city entrance.

On the first floor, only four of the six mullioned windows topped with dormer windows remain. The disappearance of the last two bays, to the east, dates back to the breakthrough of the rue des Maures, around 1800.

The western part, which has no medieval architectural elements, is an enlargement that was made at the time of the transformation of the site with the establishment of barracks (Meusnier district) in 1826. This date, inscribed on the south facade, facing the Cour d'Honneur of the barracks, attests to this transformation.



Courtyard of the Meusnier barracks : the chores (c.1910), postcard
 © Archives municipales de Tours

The castle of Tours and the Meusnier barracks, some of which have been destroyed (the north wing that was parallel to the Loire and the building between the castle and logis des gouverneurs).
 © Ville de Tours

THE CONVERSION OF THE SITE IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

THE MEUSNIER BARRACKS

After the French Revolution, the army moved into the remaining buildings of the castle. The site was converted into barracks with the construction of a long building between the two medieval towers of the royal castle, in the first quarter of the 19th century. These barracks, which were called "Logis de Mars", are located over the outer wall that originally connected the towers. It accommodated the 3rd Regiment of the Napoleonic Guard of Honor. The interior is divided into three levels with a similar layout featuring a corridor that leads to large rooms facing west

and two wooden stairs at each end of the building.

Until 1960, the military site housed the cavalry and infantry garrisons under the name Meusnier barracks. Stables and barracks, now missing, completed the complex.

The only remaining part of this military complex is the south building (built on Albert-Thomas Street) converted into a block of flats, and the building set at the west right angle currently occupied by municipal services.

AN EXHIBITION SPACE

In 1968, the site was acquired by the City of Tours which entrusted its restoration to the school of apprentices of the Compagnons du Devoir following the designs of architect Jacques Boille. The Musée Grévin Historial de Touraine and the Tropical Aquarium of Touraine were then installed in the Logis de Mars and the tower of Guise from 1984 to 2000.

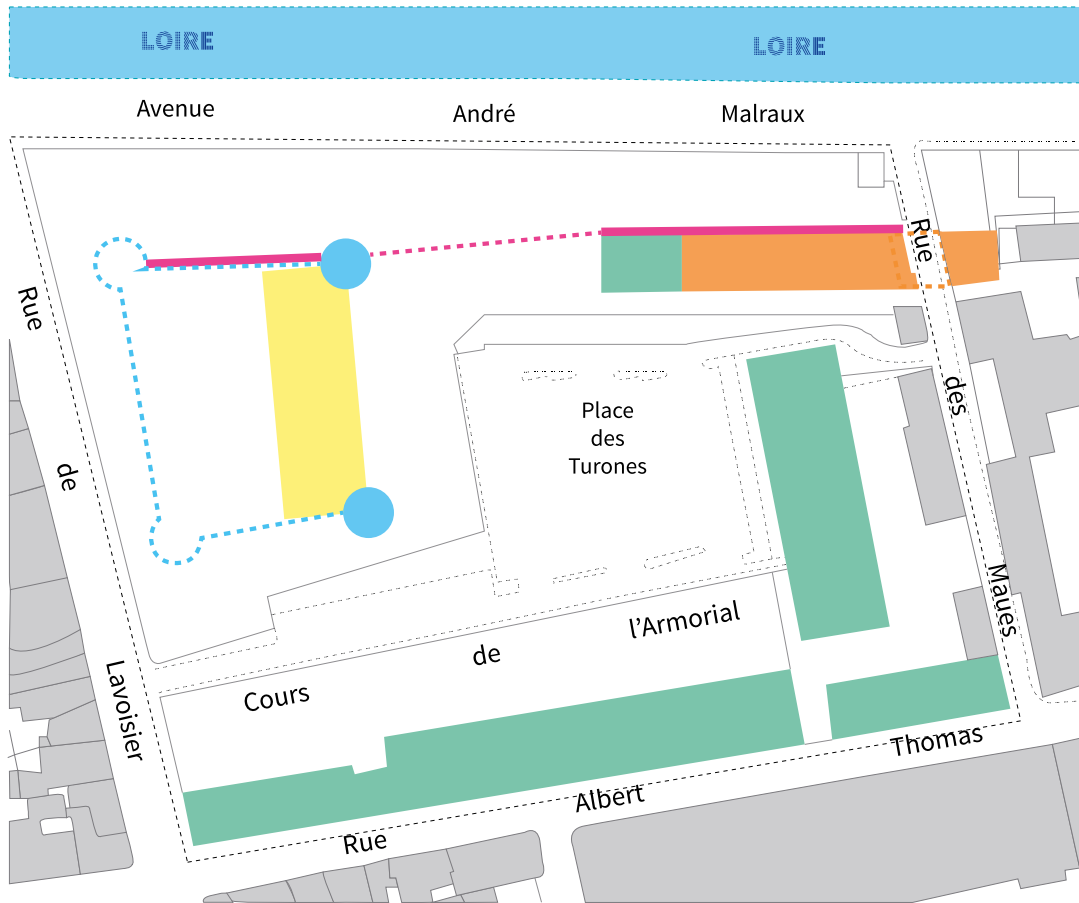
In 2001, the castle of Tours, on its four levels, became a new exhibition venue with a very diverse artistic programme that embraces all the fields of contemporary creation: painting, photography, sculpture pottery, etc. Since 2010, two floors host two temporary exhibitions each year as part of a partnership with

the prestigious Parisian Jeu de Paume museum. On the top floor, the home of the Ducs de Touraine, the permanent exhibition room, «The urban evolution of Tours», presents the history of the city's construction. It features a plethora of archaeological pieces from the excavations carried out in Tours.



MAP

- Ancient rampart (4th century)
- Royal castle (13th century)
- Logis des Gouverneurs (late 15th or early 16th century)
- Logis de Mars (18th century)
- Barracks (19th century)
- Missing buildings



Bridge of Tours,
17th century watercolor drawing from the collection « Villes, sièges et fortifications »
© Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Paris

Order of construction,
© Ville de Tours
Sarah Desbrée



« IT SEEMS TO ME THAT TOURS IS A CITY IMBUED WITH THE GENIUS OF THE LOIRE (..) IT HOLDS A TASTE FOR ENDLESS PERSPECTIVES »

René Boylesve, La Touraine.

The “**Towns and Lands of Artistic and Historic Interest [Ville et pays d’art et d’histoire]**” label is awarded by the Ministry of Culture. The recipients of this distinction are deeply aware of the importance of locals acknowledging and caring about their common heritage and surrounding architecture. They have therefore taken it upon themselves to spread learning about heritage, its conservation and appreciation. They also support contemporary creation and shed light on the quality and artistic value of often forgotten architectural elements found in our environment.

The “**animation de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine**” service sets up a great number of events to allow locals and tourists alike to discover the town’s many architectural wonders in a dynamic way with a professional guide/lecturer.

Tours is part of the national network of 190 Towns and Lands of Artistic and Historic Interest. The Ministry of Culture gives the label to local communities which promote their heritage.

Other towns and lands to visit nearby : Bourges, Chinon, Loches, Vendôme, Blois, Orléans, Pays Loire Touraine, Loire Val d’Aubois, Vallée du Cher et du Romorantinais, have all been awarded the “Ville et pays d’art et d’histoire” label.

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