

Visitor's guide

The castle of Fougères



The Château de Fougères through the ages...

Château de Fougères

19th – 20th centuries | The castle is acquired by the town and listed as a Historical Monument.

16th au 18th centuries | Placed under the responsibility of the governor of Fougères, the castle falls into disrepair. Several buildings within the outer ward collapse, including the manor house.

15th century | Construction of two artillery towers (the Raoul and Surienne towers).

14^e century | In 1373, Bertrand Duguesclin seizes the castle and the town of Fougères.

13^e century | In the mid-13th century new defensive walls were constructed to protect the outer ward, connecting the gate tower to the keep.

12^e century | Raoul II, Lord of Fougères, constructs a stone fortress to replace the old wooden fort, destroyed by Henry II of England in 1166.

11^e century | Construction of the original wooden fort just outside Nançon.

To the North, the bay of Mont-Saint-Michel; to the south, overlooking the Ile de Noirmoutier, the bay of Bourgneuf: between the two, an area known in the Middle Ages as the 'Breton Marches'. This coastal zone encompasses the historical districts of Fougères, Vitré, La Guerche-de-Bretagne, Châteaubriant, Ancenis, Clisson, Machecoul, Guérande... For more than a millennium, this region played a major role in the parallel histories of Brittany and the Kingdom of France. Living laboratories of military innovation, these castles were also thriving communities and economic centres. Nowadays, the Château de Fougères is the largest medieval fortress in Europe which still exists in such a fine state of preservation.

The Breton Marches

15th century | In 1488 the Battle de Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier ends with the French army overcoming the Bretons, marking the end of the independent Duchy of Brittany.

14th century | 1341 – 1364: War of the Breton Succession.

13th century | In 1225, Pierre Mauclerc establishes the village of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier in opposition to France.

12th century | In 1166, King Henry II of England conquers Brittany.

11th century | In 1064 and 1065, William of Normandy makes several incursions into Brittany.



Welcome to the fabulous Château de Fougères !

The Château is open all year round, with different ways to explore and learn more:

- at **your own pace**,
- following the **signposted and audioguided tour route**, taking you on a journey to the heart of medieval Fougères.

This audio-visual trail kicks off in the welcome centre with an introductory film explaining the historical context of the Breton Marches. The tour continues in the barbican and outer ward, before heading into the castle's fortified towers to discover:

- ♦ the history of their construction and the legend of Mélusine,
- ♦ day-to-day life in Fougères and Surienne's attack,
- ♦ the strategic importance of Brittany for France.

A series of 'audioguide' panels indicate the spots corresponding to the audio explanations (see the icons on the map overleaf 🎧).

- with a **specialist tour guide** who will help you to explore the rich diversity of the castle's military architecture, a heritage which survived and evolved through the centuries, adapting to new techniques in medieval warfare.



Kids' audioguide

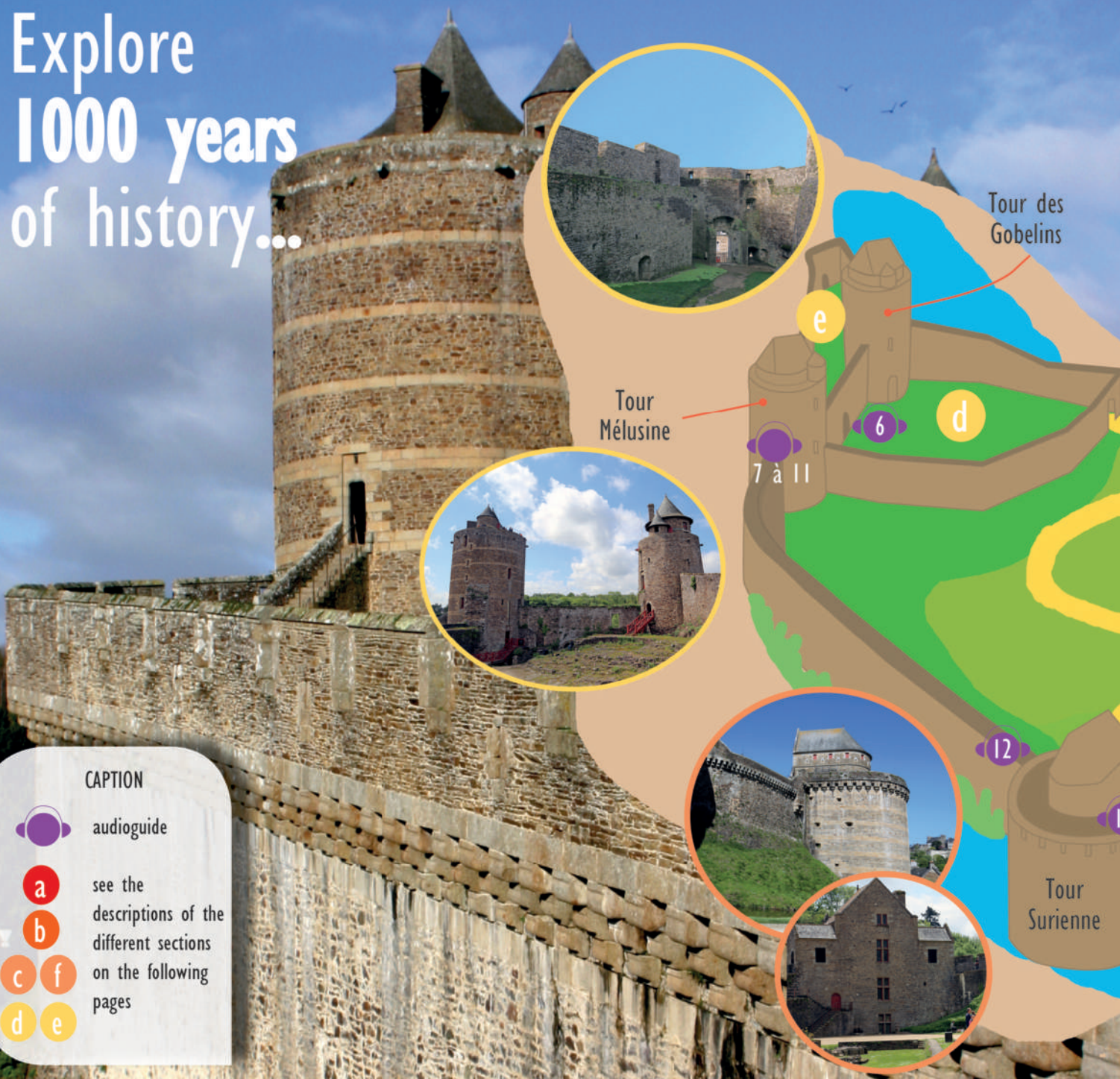
The audioguide also features an option for kids aged 6 and over. This tour is led by two characters, Mélusa and Mélusin, who introduce younger visitors to the age of chivalry, castles and battles fought by knights in armour. The tour helps children to imagine the history of Fougères all the way back to the original wooden fortress, with stories to illustrate what day-to-day life was like for the lords of the castle, and for the ordinary people who lived within the walls... The tour route is dotted with mysterious books. Mélusa and Mélusin provide clues to help you answer the questions they pose.

Careful, this is a special key! Inspired by the historical 'capucine' lock, there is no need to turn the key: simply slip it into the right lock and lift.



For kids of all ages, the ten knights' helmets dotted along the way give you the chance to plunge headlong into daily life in this medieval castle. Stand behind the helmet and use the handle to adjust it to your height. This gives you a view of the castle as it is today. Now lift the visor and let your imagination do the rest!

Explore 1000 years of history...



CAPTION



audioguide

a

see the descriptions of the different sections on the following pages

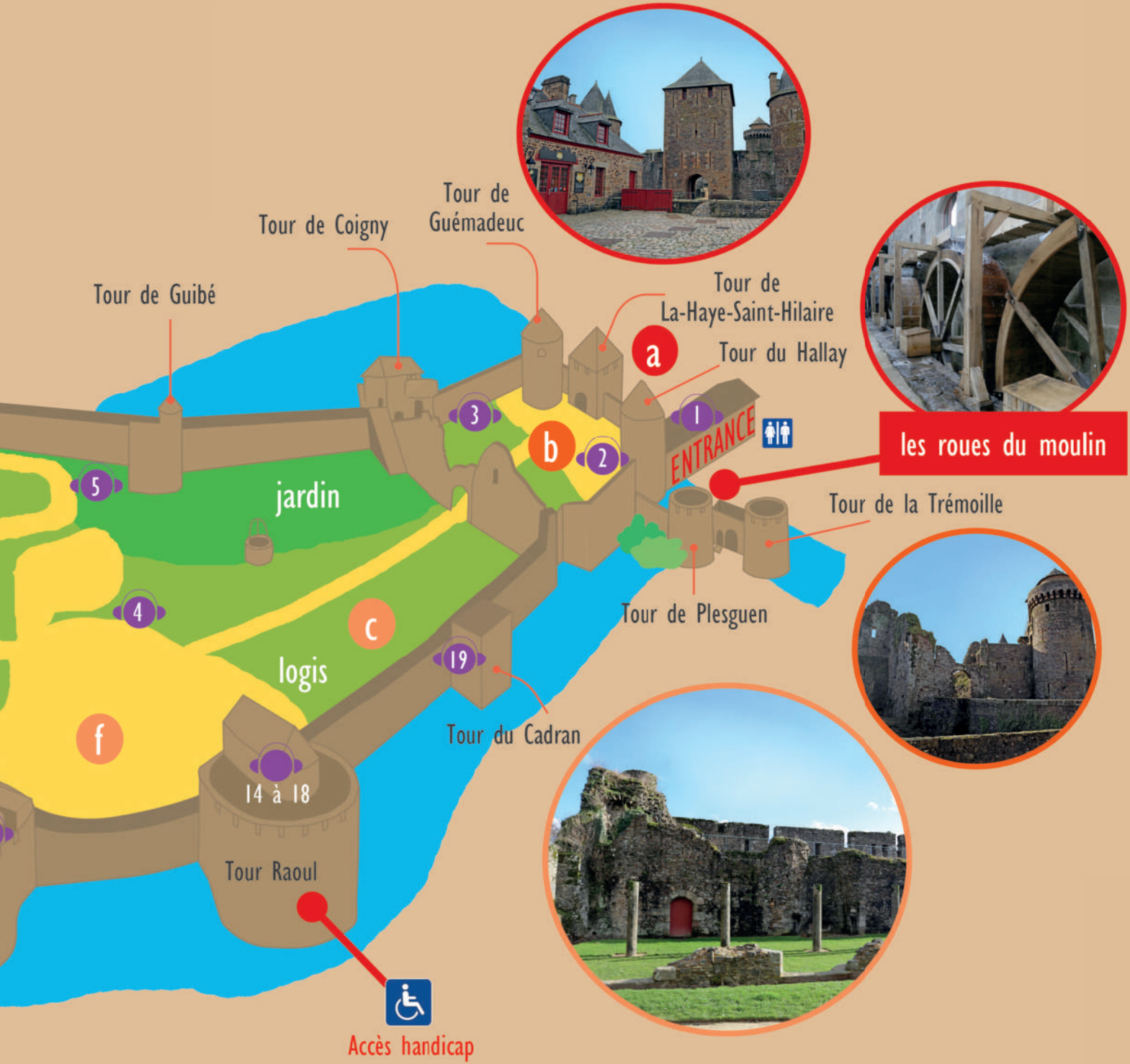
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c

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The Château de Fougères, a living encyclopaedia of military architecture...



a

The entrance

The entrance to the castle is composed of three towers. Front and centre, the square tower of La-Haye-Saint-Hilaire was erected in the late twelfth century. It is flanked by two circular towers dotted with arrowslits, added in the thirteenth century. These round structures have no blind spots, allowing the castle's defenders to forestall any surprise attacks...

Tour de La Haye Saint-Hilaire



b

Barbican

This projecting structure with its floodable moat is a vestige of the first fortifications constructed here. It is composed of a number of towers dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this period the barbican was used as a trap: assailants venturing into its perimeter would be caught in the crossfire from the different towers.

The Coëtlogon tower, in ruins since the eighteenth century, rounds off the ensemble and serves as the entrance to the outer ward.

Tour Coigny



c

The outer ward

The largest space within the castle walls, in times of peace the outer ward was the centre of daily life in Fougères. In times of war the local population took shelter within these walls. The outer ward includes various buildings: living quarters, barns for livestock, storage facilities, workshops, a chapel, the manor house and a vegetable garden.

Of the imposing, prominently-positioned manor house, now in ruins, only the grand reception room is still clearly identifiable. Its fireplace, its granite pillars supporting the upper floor and its bay windows with stone benches made this a prestigious ceremonial space. This was where the lord of the castle would hear legal disputes. Opposite the manor house, the well was the castle's only source of drinking water.

Logis seigneurial

d



Tour Mélusine et Tour des Gobelins

The inner ward

This fortified sanctum was the last refuge in the event of an attack. Also known as the redoubt, this is the castle's highest point. It was here that the original wooden fort was built sometime around the year 1000.

Fougères is one of only a handful of castles to be equipped with two keeps: the Gobelins and Mélusine towers. This just goes to demonstrate the strategic importance of the castle and the ambition of its feudal masters throughout the Middle Ages. In the middle, the foundations of another imposing keep — which was probably never actually built — hint at a change of defensive strategy.

e



La Poterne

The postern

This fortified second entrance was built in the mid-15th century to reinforce the defences of the castle's north-west wall. Overlooking the moat, it allowed the castle's defenders to supervise their water defence system.

On either side of this gate, the twin Amboise towers are named for Françoise d'Amboise, the wife of Pierre II, Duke of Brittany.

f



Tour Raoul

Tour Surienne

The artillery towers

In the late 15th century Duke François II strengthened the castle's south-facing curtain walls. He ordered the construction of two gigantic artillery towers, the Surienne and Raoul towers, both crowned with imposing battlements.

This innovative design, intended to resist the onslaught of the French cannons, was ultimately ineffective. The castle was stormed by the army of French king Charles VIII in July 1488.

FOCUS ON...

The water mills



By the twelfth century, the Château de Fougères was equipped with four mills, officially owned by the lord who would collect his cut of the flour they produced. These water wheels were powered by the nearby river Nançon. These were highly productive mills, and it is estimated that at full capacity each mill was capable of producing 100kg of flour every hour. Nowadays one of the wheels is connected to a generator, supplying the electricity required to run the castle's welcome centre.

« This castle is quite above and beyond words... I am not sure but that Fougères is the finest of them all.»

T.E. Lawrence - Letter dated 26 th August 1907

Fougères



**VILLES
& PAYS
D'ART &
D'HISTOIRE
DIRE**



1 ticket - 3 attractions

This summer, buy your ticket to the castle and get free entry to two other historical sites in Fougères :

- Musée Emmanuel de la Villéon,
- the bell tower of Eglise Saint-Léonard
- You can also enjoy a free guided tour of the town

Visitors buying tickets to the museum or bell tower are also entitled to discounted entrance to the castle.

For more information visit :
www.chateau-fougères.fr

Practical information

Get in touch :

- heritage department : 02 99 99 79 59
- chateau@fougères.fr
- www.chateau-fougères.fr
- www.fougères.fr

Getting here :

- Address : Place Pierre Symon
- exit the A84 at junction 29, follow signs
- for Fougères Centre Ville

