



OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

# the Royal Castle of Blois

Blois · From 16€

<https://chateaublois.visit-tickets.com/en/> · Skip-the-Line Tickets & Official Prices



## History & Experience

### ORIGIN & HISTORY

## A Chronicle in Stone

GOOGLE **4.5** ★★★★★ 22 932 reviews

TIQETS **4.6** ★★★★★ 741 reviews

The Royal Castle of Blois stands as a **\*\*living chronicle\*\*** of French history, where each architectural wing represents a distinct era and royal ambition. Its origins trace back to the **10th century**, when Thibaud le Tricheur erected the first fortress on the banks of the Loire. This medieval stronghold served as the seat of powerful feudal counts before passing into the hands of the House of Orléans. The castle witnessed the tragic assassination of Louis d'Orléans in **1407**, an event that plunged the region into civil war and left his widow, Valentine Visconti, to inscribe her grief on its walls with the poignant motto: 'Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien'.

Transformed from a feudal fortress into a **\*\*royal residence\*\***, the castle underwent a radical metamorphosis under King Louis XII. Between **1498 and 1503**, he commissioned the construction of a new wing that blended late Gothic flamboyance with emerging Renaissance elements. This period marked the castle's golden age as a diplomatic hub, hosting figures like Cesare Borgia and Niccolò Machiavelli. The elegant facade, adorned with the king's porcupine emblem, symbolized a shift towards humanism and artistic refinement, moving away from purely defensive structures to celebrate **monarchical power** through beauty and comfort.

The arrival of Francis I introduced the most iconic feature of the site: the **\*\*Spiral Staircase\*\***. Completed around **1528**, this double-helix masterpiece is a technical marvel of the Renaissance, allowing two people to ascend without ever meeting. It reflects the king's desire to showcase innovation and grandeur, aligning Blois with the artistic movements sweeping across Europe. The staircase's open central cage and intricate carvings demonstrate the fusion of engineering precision and aesthetic daring, making it one of the most recognizable symbols of **Renaissance architecture** in France.

In the 19th century, architect Félix Duban restored the royal apartments, infusing them with vibrant polychrome decorations inspired by contemporary research into medieval aesthetics. His work preserved the historical integrity while adapting the spaces for modern appreciation, much like Viollet-le-Duc did elsewhere. Today, the castle remains a testament to centuries of evolution, from its Viking-era attacks to its role during World War II. Each stone tells a story of **political intrigue**, artistic revolution, and royal legacy, inviting visitors to walk through layers of time that have shaped the nation.

## THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping into the courtyard of the Royal Castle of Blois feels like entering a **“theatrical stage”** where history unfolds before your eyes. The contrast between the austere medieval towers and the ornate Renaissance facades creates a visual dialogue that captivates immediately. Morning light filters through the high windows, illuminating dust motes that dance above ancient stone floors, evoking the presence of kings and queens who once paced these halls. The air carries a sense of solemnity mixed with curiosity, as if the walls themselves are whispering secrets of past dynasties.

As you ascend the famous spiral staircase, the atmosphere shifts from contemplative to awe-inspiring. The rhythmic clinking of footsteps on stone echoes softly, enhancing the feeling of being part of a timeless ritual. Visitors often pause to admire the intricate details of the woodwork and stonework, feeling a tangible connection to the artisans who crafted them centuries ago. This immersive experience transforms the castle from a mere monument into a **“sensory journey”**, where every corner reveals a new layer of narrative and emotion.



## PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

## Practical Information

**ADDRESS**

City center · Metro: Not available (Blois does not have a metro). Easy walking access from the SNCF train station (15 min) or city center parking lots.

**OPENING HOURS**

Hours vary by season and school holidays. Check the official website before visiting, especially in winter when opening days may be reduced.

**PRICING**

Free entry for children depending on age (check variants). Adult ticket starts at €16. Audio guide available as an add-on (+€3)

**VISIT DURATION**

Allow 1 to 1.5 hours for a complete tour of the castle with the audio guide. If you include the Fine Arts Museum located in the same building, plan for approxim

**PHOTOS**

Photography is allowed without flash or tripod for personal use. The Staircase of Francis I is particularly photogenic, but avoid crowds by arriving early to ca

**AUDIENCE**

Suitable for all audiences thanks to the family-friendly audio guide route. Ideal for history and architecture enthusiasts, as well as couples seeking a romanti

## HOW TO GET THERE

## Access & Transportation

**Metro**

: Castle — 1 min à pied

Train Station (7 min) · Blois-Le Breuil Airport (40 min)

**Bus**

: Château (Blois) — 1 min à pied

Train Station (9 min) · Blois-Le Breuil Airport (64 min)

**Car**

Train Station (4 min) · Blois-Le Breuil Airport (50 min)

**Bike**

Train Station (3 min) · Blois-Le Breuil Airport (67 min)

## LOCALISATION

# Où se trouve the Royal Castle of Blois ?

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6 Place du Château — 41000 Blois

47°35.142' N, 1°19.842' E



## ORGANIZATION

# Navigating the Royal Wings

### Ground Level (Medieval & Louis XII)

Begin your journey in the oldest sections, including the Tour du Foix and the Hall of States. Here, you'll encounter the robust medieval architecture and the elegant Louis XII wing. The Chapel of Saint-Calais showcases intricate stained glass, while the Great Hall offers a glimpse into feudal justice and ceremonies.

### First Floor (Francis I Wing)

Ascend to the heart of the Renaissance with the iconic Spiral Staircase. Explore the royal apartments decorated by Félix Duban, featuring vibrant frescoes and period furniture. This level highlights the artistic achievements of Francis I's reign, blending Italian influences with French craftsmanship.

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### Upper Levels & Terraces

Visit the Queen's pavilion and the Chamber of Pendulums, shrouded in legend. From the terraces, enjoy panoramic views of the Loire River and the city of Blois. These spaces provide a serene conclusion to your tour, offering both historical insight and breathtaking scenery.

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## ACCESSIBILITY



### Accessibility for people with reduced mobility

Access partially limited by historical stairs; magnetic loop available for the hard of hearing.



### Families

Interactive family trail available on the audio guide to make history accessible to children.



### Audio guide

French, English, Spanish, Italian, German



## Must-sees

### SELECTION

## Must-See Architectural Marvels

### 01

Francis I Wing

#### Staircase of Francis I

This double-helix staircase is the crown jewel of the castle, showcasing **\*\*Renaissance ingenuity\*\***. Its open central cage allows two people to pass without crossing paths, a feat of engineering unmatched at the time. Admire the intricate carvings and the play of light within the structure.

💡 Legend says that **Francis I** designed it so he could observe courtiers ascending unnoticed, adding a layer of intrigue to its function.

### 02

Medieval Section

#### Tour du Foix

As the oldest remnant dating to the **10th century**, this cylindrical tower anchors the castle's feudal origins. Its massive stone walls contrast sharply with later additions, offering a raw glimpse into medieval defense strategies. Climb inside to feel the thickness of history.

💡 It survived numerous sieges, standing as a silent witness to the **Viking attacks** that threatened early Blois.

### 03

Louis XII Wing

#### Chapel of Saint-Calais

Built by Louis XII, this chapel features exquisite stained glass and Gothic arches. It was here that **Joan of Arc** received blessings before her campaign. The spiritual ambiance is palpable, enhanced by the soft light filtering through colored panes.

💡 The inscription near the altar commemorates Joan's departure, marking a pivotal moment in **French liberation**.

### 04

FÉLIX DUBAN Francis I Wing

#### Royal Apartments

Restored in the 19th century, these rooms burst with color and detail. Duban's polychrome decorations reflect a romanticized view of the Renaissance. Observe the ceiling frescoes and period furniture that recreate the opulence of royal life.

💡 Duban used archival sketches to ensure accuracy, bridging the gap between **historical preservation** and artistic interpretation.

05

Medieval Section

### Hall of States

This vast hall hosted judicial proceedings and grand feasts. Its high vaulted ceilings and stone fireplace evoke the authority of medieval lords. Imagine the echoes of debates and decrees that shaped regional governance.

💡 Charles d'Orléans held poetry contests here, fostering a cultural renaissance amidst political turmoil.

06

Queen's Pavilion

### Chamber of Pendulums

Known for its mysterious legends, this room is said to be haunted by Catherine de' Medici. The name derives from acoustic phenomena or decorative elements resembling pendulums. Experience the eerie silence that amplifies local myths.

💡 Visitors report hearing faint whispers, attributed to the spirit of **Catherine de' Medici** guarding her secrets.

07

Upper Levels

### Terrace Views

From the terraces, gaze upon the Loire River and the cityscape. The vista captures the harmony between natural beauty and urban development. It's an ideal spot for photography, especially during golden hour.

💡 Kings once surveyed their domains from here, planning strategies against the backdrop of the **Loire Valley**.

08

Medieval Section

### Valentine Visconti's Inscription

Find the engraved motto 'Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien' on the castle walls. This poignant phrase reflects the grief of Valentine Visconti after her husband's assassination. It serves as a powerful reminder of personal tragedy intertwined with history.

💡 The inscription has become a symbol of **resilience and loss**, resonating with visitors today.

TIPS

# Essential Visitor Tips

|                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>TIMING</b></p> <p>Arrive at opening time to avoid crowds, especially for photos of the Staircase of Francis I. Morning light enhances the architectural details.</p>             | <p><b>BILLET</b></p> <p>Book online in advance, particularly during peak season (July-August), to skip queues and guarantee entry. Combined tickets with the Fine Arts Museum offer great value.</p> |
| <p><b>PARCOURS</b></p> <p>Start with the medieval sections to understand the castle's origins, then move to the Renaissance wings. This chronological approach aids comprehension.</p> | <p><b>PHOTO</b></p> <p>Capture the terrace views during off-peak hours for unobstructed shots. Use natural morning light to highlight the carved details of the staircase.</p>                       |
| <p><b>PAUSE</b></p> <p>There is no restaurant inside; plan to eat at nearby spots like Restaurant Le Grand Veneur or bring a picnic to enjoy in the Jardin des Plantes.</p>            | <p><b>ENFANTS</b></p> <p>Use the family-friendly audio guide route, which includes interactive questions and riddles about Joan of Arc and Charles d'Orléans to engage young minds.</p>              |
| <p><b>AUDIOGUIDE</b></p> <p>Rent the audio guide (+€3) for essential context on architectural nuances. Available in 8 languages, it enriches the experience significantly.</p>         | <p><b>CONFORT</b></p> <p>Wear comfortable shoes with grippy soles due to uneven floors and many stairs. Dress in layers as temperatures vary between indoor and outdoor areas.</p>                   |



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## FAQ

**How much is entry to the Royal Castle of Blois?**

The adult ticket starts at €16. This price grants access to the historical wings of the castle. For an enriched experience, we strongly recommend adding the audio guide, available as an extra for +€3 per person.

**Is it really necessary to book in advance?**

Yes, online booking is highly recommended during peak season (July-August) and weekends. This helps avoid queues at the ticket office. On weekdays outside of holidays, the ticket window remains possible but less guarantee.

**Are there discounted rates?**

Preferential rates are available for young people (18-25 years old), groups, and large families. Children accompanied by adults are often free depending on their age. Check the specific conditions on the official website.

**Can I cancel my ticket?**

Cancellation policies vary depending on the type of ticket purchased. Most online tickets offer flexibility up to 24 hours before the visit. Please review the legal terms during your order to know the exact deadlines.

**What is the recommended duration for visiting the castle?**

Allow 1h to 1h30 for a standard castle tour with an audioguide. If you also wish to explore the Fine Arts Museum located in the same complex, plan for a full half-day to ensure you don't miss anything and can fully appreciate.

## DID YOU KNOW?

## Anecdotes &amp; curiosities

**Joan of Arc's Blessing**

In **1429**, Joan of Arc was blessed in the castle's chapel by Regnault de Chartres before lifting the siege of Orléans. This event marked the beginning of her legendary campaign, forever linking Blois to French resistance.

**Poetry Contest of 1458**

Charles d'Orléans organized a poetry contest where François Villon distinguished himself with his *Ballade des contradictions*. This cultural event transformed the castle into a hub of literary excellence.

**Félix Duban's Restoration**

The current polychrome decorations are the work of Félix Duban, who restored the royal apartments in the 19th century. His efforts preserved the Renaissance spirit while adapting it for modern audiences.

**Legend of the Chamber of Pendulums**

Local lore claims the Chamber of Pendulums is haunted by Catherine de' Medici's spirit. Whether true or not, the room's acoustics create an eerie atmosphere that fuels imagination.

## AROUND THE MUSEUM

Beyond the castle walls, Blois offers a charming blend of culture and relaxation. Just steps away, the **Blois Fine Arts Museum** complements the historical tour with its rich collection of local and national artworks. For dining, **Restaurant Le Grand Veneur** provides gourmet cuisine perfect for celebrating after exploring the royal rooms. Don't miss the **Cathedral Saint-Louis de Blois**, whose Flamboyant Gothic spires dominate the skyline and offer stunning views of the castle. Finally, unwind in the peaceful **Jardin des Plantes**, a botanical haven ideal for reflecting on your visit amidst nature's tranquility.



Visiting the Royal Castle of Blois is not just about observing architecture; it is about touching the pulse of French history. From the tragic whispers of Valentine Visconti to the radiant ambition of Francis I, every room holds a fragment of our collective memory. Leave with the understanding that you have walked in the footsteps of giants, carrying the weight and wonder of centuries in your heart.