



Château-Landon

medieval town





An exceptional site

Discovering the medieval town...Gem of the South Seine-et-Marne!

Labelled a Village de Caractère since 2014 by the Department.

Located in the south of the Seine-et-Marne department, Château-Landon is a surprising village, built on a rocky spur overlooking the green valley of the Fusain river, which has earned it the nickname "Rocamadour" of the Gâtinais.

The presence of an exceptional religious and civil heritage demonstrates the prosperity of the town since the 12th century. Château-Landon was indeed a place one was obliged to travel through because of its proximity to Provins, and its famous fairs. Strolling through Château-Landon is like strolling through history... As you wander through the narrow streets, you will discover the ramparts, the 17 washhouses and will no doubt imagine the life of the people of Château-Landon in the days of the washerwomen...

Yes! Château-Landon is without doubt a village with character, an surprising break that is well worth a little detour...

A rich history

Once the capital of the Counts of Gâtinais, it was given to the King of France in 1068 by Foulques IV le Réchin. It then became a royal residence: Louis VI, Louis VII and Philippe Auguste regularly stayed here. Since the 6th century, it has been renowned as a religious and pilgrimage site.



According to legend, a monk named Severin, who came from Switzerland, miraculously cured Clovis (the first Christian Frankish king), before coming here to die around the year 511.

It was to honour his memory that Childebert I, the third son of Clovis, had the first basilica built around 545, which over the centuries became the great royal abbey of Saint-Séverin.

It is for this reason that many people came from far and wide to venerate the relics of the Saint. Thus, thanks to its powerful abbey, richly maintained by the kings of France and the popes, the town became a very important religious centre with its 17 buildings, including 4 monasteries and priories.

Birthplace of the Plantagenet lineage...

The son of Count Foulques IV, the Rechin, Foulques V, Count of Château-Landon, became the first king of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem after the crusades. His son Geoffrey married Matilda of England and became the head of a famous royal line, the "Plantagenets", which ruled England from 1154 to 1485. It was this Geoffrey who slipped a small sprig of broom to his hat, hence the name "Plantagenet" which made the family famous.

A draping town...

In a royal charter dating from 1381, the city is listed among the 17 "textile towns of the kingdom. Today, we can find traces of 17 mills along the small river of Fusain, flowing at the foot of the town where the wool was spun.

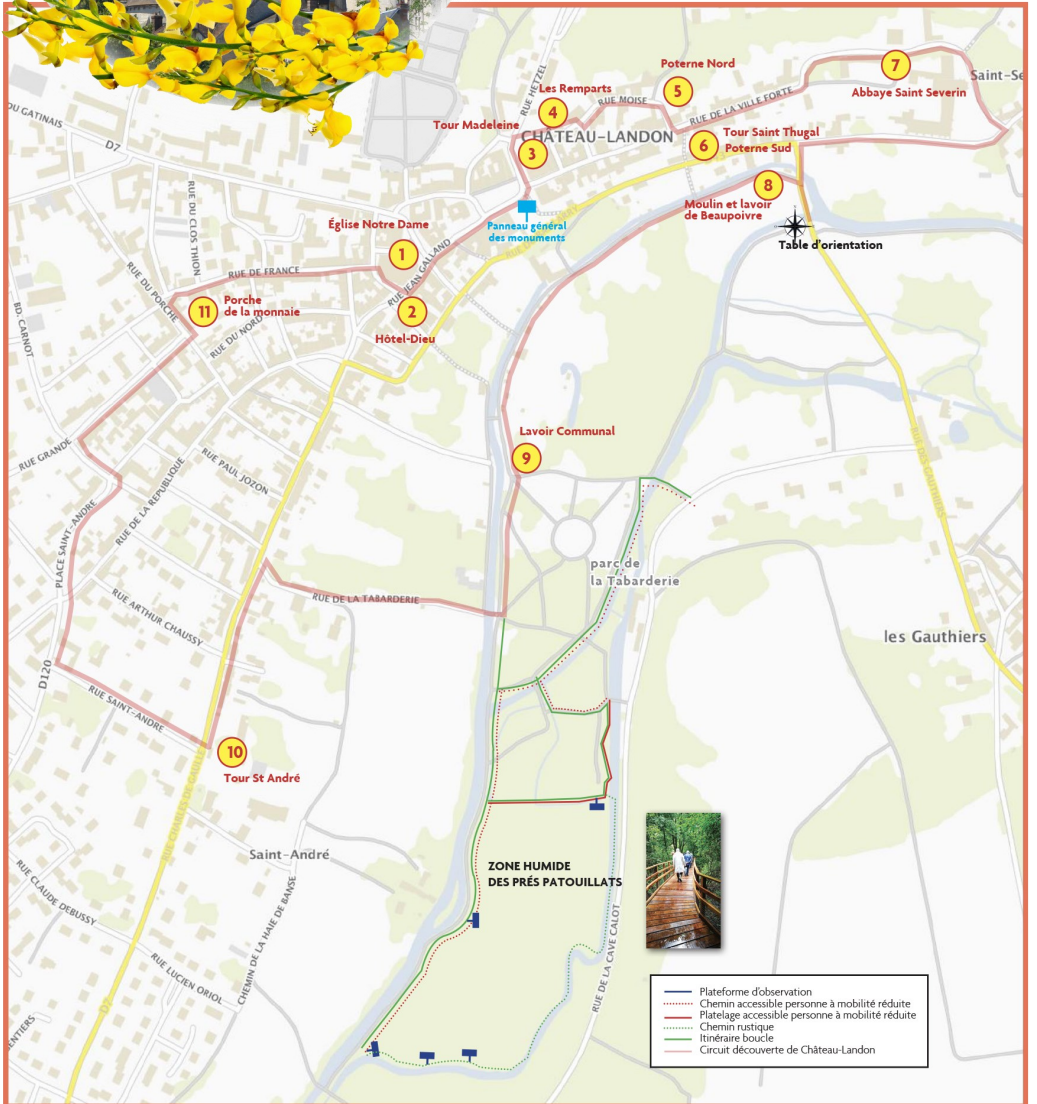
The town produced, among other things, "tabards", large woollen coats, the memory of which comes to mind through the name of the "Tabarderie" park, a green, and recreational area along the Fusain



A bucolic walk that will give you a sense of height.

Discovery tour of the medieval town of Château-Landon, 4 kilometres long, duration about 1h30.

Take a short break in the Tabarderie park where you will find the Prés Patouillats wetland.





1 - The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption blends Carolingian, Roman and Gothic styles. In the Middle Ages, its 57-metre high bell tower, unique in the French landscape for its openwork, was a distant landmark for pilgrims and travellers.

The 10th century north aisle built in "herringbone" style is the only vestige of the earliest part. The Roman west door and the imposing unadorned pillars of the north aisle date from the 11th century. The transition from the Roman to the Gothic period is evident in the 12th century transept and choir and in the base of the bell tower, the floors of which were not completed until 14th century.

The extension of the church on the right of the nave was built in the 14th century and opens onto four lancet windows in a flamboyant Gothic style.

The belltower's spire and four pinnacles were destroyed by lightning in 1668. They were replaced by a pointed roof to which four clocks were added in the 19th century. These were removed after the gale in December 1999.

Entrusted to the best master craftsmen of their time, the sculpted stones are remarkable. The exterior modillions, the claws, the masks and the decorated capitals of the columns in the apse are visible evidence of this.



2 - Hôtel-Dieu

In 1178 Jean Vère, 6th Abbot of Saint-Séverin, sold the land on which Guillaume de Blois, archbishop of Sens, built and endowed a Hôtel-Dieu. The building offers hospitality to the poor, the sick and pilgrims who come to meditate on the relics of Saint-Séverin and Saint-Thugal and provides a stopping place on the way to Santiago de Compostela.

It is one of the few remaining Hôtel-Dieu in the Paris region.

In the very plain room, all decorative artifice is banished, except for the 17th century altarpiece decorated with a vast scallop shell dominated by two angels and a turtle dove "Symbol of good health".

Partially destroyed in the 16th century during the wars of religion and then threatened with demolition by royal decision, it was rebuilt in 1679 after violent protests from the population.

In the 19th century, the Hôtel-Dieu slowly fell into disrepair. After a programme of restoration, it housed a class for poor girls and then a school of stereotomy (the science of stone cutting).

After a long period of neglect, the building was opened to the public in 2015 following major work on security and restoration. In 2021 it became the town's Cultural Centre.



3 - The Madeleine tower

At the end of the 14th century, King Charles VI authorised the citizens of Château-Landon to build ramparts. These included five towers. The Madeleine Tower is the northwest corner tower.

Having withstood invasions, looting, fires and the wear and tear of time, the Madeleine Tower is a fine illustration of the defence system of the fortified town. The upper part of this massive tower built against the ramparts connects with the covered way, visible for about fifty metres to the east. At the beginning of the 15th century, in the middle of the Hundred Years War, underground rooms were gradually created and enlarged, then organised to allow free movement inside the fortified enclosure. In times of danger, they were used as shelters for the population as well as for barracks and food reserves.

9 metres high and 6.50 metres in diameter with walls 3 metres thick at the base and pierced by 3 loopholes at mid-height, the tower is built of stone rubble and flint embedded in mortar, the whole covered with a facing of dressed limestone from Château-Landon.



4 - The north rampart

There are still some visible remains of the medieval defence system on the north face of the ramparts despite the many constructions built in particular towards the end of the 17th century.

The intermediate "Quincampe" turret built right up against the rampart is located halfway between two larger towers, the Madeleine Tower and another now integrated into the housing near the North Postern.

At the foot of the rampart, barred openings, created at a later date, give access to the "inner covered way", a ring of underground tunnels around the fortified town : over time during alerts these connected the shelters and the rooms provided for the soldiers and the reserves.

By taking the stairs to reach the threshold of the Castrum, the fortified part of the town, one can see the thickness of the wall, illustrating once again the strength of this rampart. The stones, like those of the town monuments, are made of limestone from Château-Landon. Very hard and frost-resistant, it has been chosen for the construction of many Parisian monuments.



5 - The North Postern

This postern in the northern rampart leads to the dry valley. It had to be closed during the frequent turbulent moments of the town's history.

You can still make out the walkway at the top where it enters the adjoining house, built like many others on the ramparts. Its north wing now houses an old circular defence tower visible from the downward path called the Debeuze (ox path).

Looting and attacks on the town were recurrent, especially during the Hundred Years War when traitors were hanged on these ramparts. A glorious feat of arms on this site deserves to be remembered. Towards the end of the wars of religion during which the town was occupied 7 times including 3 sieges, on November 2, 1587, for 5 days, 21 soldiers, 56 villagers and 120 peasants resisted the attack of 3000 German Huguenot horsemen, defeated shortly before by the Duc de Guise at Vimory, near Montargis. After 416 cannon shots, a breach was made in the rampart driving the besieged to negotiate their survival before the assault. The horsemen withdrew "not without having spoiled everything and caused such a disaster that it is impossible to express".



6 - Saint-Thugal tower and South Postern

Adjoining the South Postern which previously controlled the passage through the ramparts, the tower of the former Saint-Thugal church is the most extraordinary monument in the town.

In the 8th century, a church was built by the monks of Saint-Séverin. First dedicated to Saint-Etienne, the church took Saint-Thugal as its patron in the 10th century in homage to this 6th century Breton's relics saved when the monks of Tréguier fled from the Vikings.

The church welcomed many pilgrimages come to venerate these relics. Two floors were added to the bell tower. Later the church became part of the defence system of the ramparts.

After the Revolution, only the tower of Saint-Thugal remained.

The South Postern is an open passage in the ramparts leading to the valley of the river Fusain. A stone staircase was built there in 1837.

Opposite this building, on the other side of the street, was the residence of the Counts of Gâtinais which would become the Royal House. It was destroyed at the end of the Hundred Years War when the city was taken by the English. It is in this house that Fulk IV Réchin was born in 1043, later to become Count of Gâtinais and Anjou, grandfather of the 1st Plantagenet whose dynasty gave three kings to England.



7 - The royal abbey of Saint-Severin

This abbey was founded in 545, in honour of the monk Séverin, originally from the Valais, Switzerland. In 505 Séverin was called to the bedside of Clovis who was suffering from a persistent fever. He covered the King of the Franks with his cloak and miraculously healed him. The monk died at Château-Landon in 507. Clovis then had his

son Childebert promise to erect a church in homage to the holy man.

With the worship of his relics, Saint-Séverin church became an important pilgrimage centre and an abbey run by Augustinian monks.

For more than 3 centuries the abbey was beset with trouble : Merovingian decadence, the seizure of its property by Charles Martel and the Saxon invasion in 774.

Under Louis VII and Philippe Auguste it was restored and equipped with powerful fortifications. Ruined again by the English in 1436, then looted during the wars of religion, it experienced a long period of stagnation until the Revolution when it once again suffered significant destruction.

The building, which had become national property, was sold in 1892 to the Ouvré family, who restored it and donated it to the Department to become a hospice for the elderly and destitute. In 1927, 12th century frescoes evoking the healing of Clovis were discovered in the crypt of the old church. In the early 2000s, major work transformed it into the Departmental Retirement Home of Saint-Séverin.



8 - Beauvoir mill

In a charter of King Charles VI dating from 1381, the city is listed among the 17 drapery towns of the kingdom. There were up to 17 watermills along the two arms of the river Fusain. They functioned to crush elm and chestnut bark, full and card wool and tan skins.

Drapery then gives rise to several trades including weaving. The city produced in particular, tabards, large woollen coats worn under armour. It also produced highly renowned cameline cloth, made of goat hair.

The Beau Repaire mill was owned by the monks of Saint-Séverin. It was given in 1696 to Claude Petit de Beauvoir, provost of the city and lawyer in Parliament and became the Beauvoir mill.

Near this tanning mill was its drying barn and underground passages where skins macerated in the tanbark of local trees. The hides were then fullled in the "tumbler barrels" operated in the mill.

Under Louis Philippe, the mill was designated as a factory because of its operatig standars. It became a grain mill and was transformed at the begiming of the 20th century into an alternator which supplies low-voltage electricity to the neighbouring Gauthiers grain mill, which is still in operation.



9 - The big wash house

At the end of the 11th century, the monks of Saint-Séverin dug an artificial channel parallel to the main river Fusain to allow the development of trades and skills around the mills. Below the town, washhouses were built and these greatly lightened the work of the village women.

There are now 18 washhouses which all benefited from a restoration programme in 2013.

Traditional laundry washing at the beginning of the 20th century.

At the large washhouse, so-called "steamed" laundering was undertaken twice a year over three days, after Easter

week and then at the end of the harvest, a much-awaited ritual !

On the first day, the dirty linen that had been soaked the previous day was carried in a wheelbarrow to the washhouse, scrubbed on boards and rinsed before being beaten which was the last operation of the day.

On the second day, it was necessary to keep a wood fire burning all the time to maintain a supply of boiling water. The laundry was placed in a large tub and water was poured onto it in small amounts. At the bottom of the tub a bag of ash contributed to the effectiveness of the laundry.

On the third day, the laundry was rinsed and the water beaten out. Finally the washerwomen could go back to the village with their precious laundry.



10 - the Saint André tower

The Saint André tower is the remains of a Cluniac priory attached to the abbey of Ferrières-en-Gâtinais. A simple chapel in the 10th century with no monks, it was transformed into a monastic establishment in the middle of the 12th century to accommodate Benedictine monks.

Its current state bears witness to the vicissitudes suffered over the centuries, similar to those of many other monuments in the town, particularly during the Hundred Years War and the wars of religion where it was destroyed by the German horsemen before being re-established as a priory and then devastated again.

It was administered by an incumbent prior, one of whom was Antoine Godeau, bishop of Grasse appointed by Richelieu, the 17th century King's adviser and learned prelate.

Absolute obedience was required of the monks. From two-thirty in the morning, their day was punctuated by times of prayer, work and religious services. The monk took a vow of poverty upon his arrival at the monastery and he would end his days there. Admitted standing in his grave, when he was buried his brothers would throw handfuls of earth over him while reciting a continual flow of prayers .



11 - The porch of the currency

This civil monument served as a currency exchange office. All that remains is the porch with its 14th century gable and its Renaissance-style facade windows.

Following the initiative of Charles the Bald, a mint had been operating since the 9th century in adapted and protected cellars inside the fortified town. Charlemagne's gold currency, highly prized by Viking looters, was replaced by silver deniers (small coins).

Certain deniers minted with the effigies of the kings who ruled after Charles the Bald gained considerable importance when the County of Gâtinais was attached to the royal domain of Philippe 1er in 1068.

They were then abolished under Philippe Auguste when monetary system of the kingdom was unified.

Economic development linked to the drapery trade stimulated the town's fairs and markets. New credit techniques were introduced and because of the diverse nature of money, the role of money changers became essential. For this reason an exchange office was set up in this commercial district which had a large Jewish community. Victims of prejudice, they were driven out in 1180 only to return a few years later .



The wetland of the Patouvillats meadows of Château-Landon

The wetland of the Parc de la Tabarderie has been restored to enhance the natural heritage and preserve biodiversity; it is located within the Espace Naturel Sensible communal de la Vallée du Fusain.

In order to visit this area in the best possible conditions, 800 metres of footpath have been

created, including almost 300 metres of boardwalk designed for people with reduced mobility.

All along the route, which is equipped with benches and tree trunk for resting, you will be able to observe a wide variety of flora and fauna, as well as surprises such as the troll houses created by the young pupils of the town's school.

Observation platforms punctuate the visit, which is enhanced by educational panels evoking the specificity of the site.





ACCESS

*A6 motorway

Exit n°16 Montereau-Fault-Yonne/Nemours

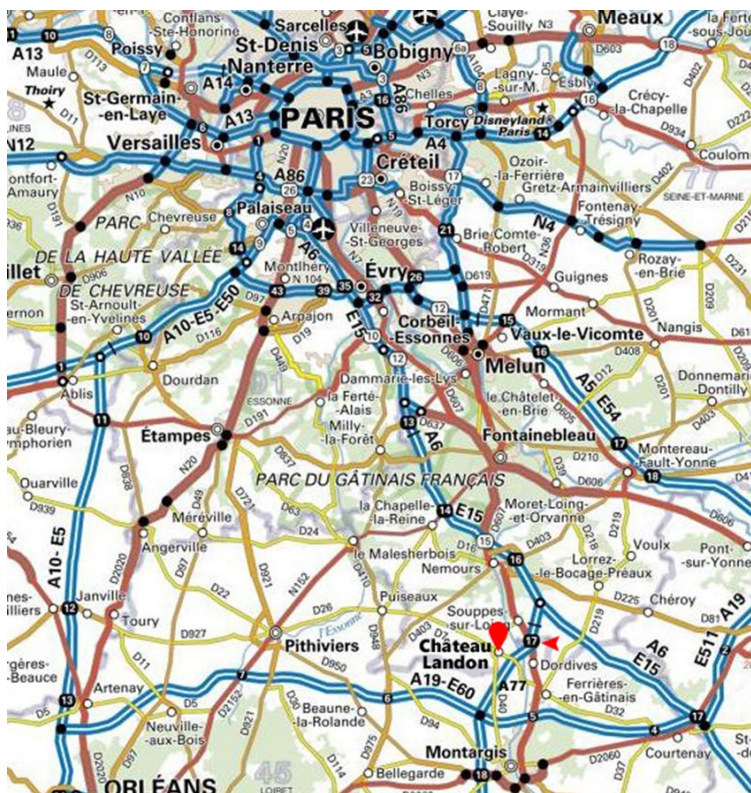
RD 607 and 2007 towards Montargis to Dordives then RD 62 and 43.

*A77 motorway

Exit n°17 Montargis/Souppes-sur-Loing/Dordives then RD 62 and 43.

*Gare de Lyon-Paris, line R Paris/Montargis/Nevers, stop at Gare de Souppes

Then Bus Express line 34 Melun/Château-Landon, 1st stop place du Marché.



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