

THE CASTLE GARDENS

d'Ainay-le-Vieil

LISTED AS A HISTORIC MONUMENT
LABELED JARDIN REMARQUABLE



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LOCATION

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INFORMATION

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MORE INFORMATION

www.chateau-ainaylevieil.com

LES CHARTREUSES

Parterre de broderies
Parterre garden

Cloître des simples
Medicinal cloister

Jardin des méditations
Garden of meditations

Vergers sculptés
Sculpted orchard

Jardin bouquetier
Flower garden

Volière
Birdcage

Allée des poètes
Poets' alley

Kiosque
Kiosk

Parc à l'anglaise
English-style park



Pavillon de la grainetière
Pavilion of the grainetière

START OF VISIT

Pavillon de la volière
Aviary pavilion

Jardin des arcades
Garden of arcades

WC
HOME SHOP

Roseraie
Rose garden

Jardin de la guérite
Gatehouse garden

PARKING

ENTER

Built on an older castle, the Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil is one of the best-preserved feudal fortresses of the 15th century in the Centre-Val de Loire region. Its vast octagonal enclosure, which contains a medieval dwelling and a Renaissance residential building, is surrounded by moats and situated in a 7-hectare landscaped park.

The Lords of Bigny made it their home and built a Renaissance residential building starting in 1467, the year in which the Château d'Ainay-le-Vieil came into the family of the current owners, where it has remained ever since.

Family longevity is matched by the longevity of the gardens, which have existed since the Renaissance. They have regularly suffered the ravages of time but have been consistently recreated within the same ancient structures.

The gardens date from three different periods:

- **The Renaissance water gardens,**
- **The 19th century landscaped park and chartreuses,**
- **The 20th century contemporary gardens.**

The Renaissance Water Gardens

From the beginning, during the construction of the fortress in the 15th century, the presence of water was crucial as it played an essential defensive role. From this period date the castle's moats and the ditches of living water that surrounded the second enclosure, which has now disappeared but on which the two Renaissance Pavilions were built.

In the 16th century, as times became less troubled, castles opened up to the outside world, and gardens were created. The abundant water at Ainay played an essential role in the creation of the new gardens. The old hydraulic circuit inherited from the Middle Ages was regularized, enlarged, and transformed into a network of canals: one framing the "Grand Carré en l'Île" and the "Long Square" located between the two Renaissance pavilions.

Centuries passed, and the gardens of Ainay evolved with the fashions but retained their original water structure. The Cassini family made a very precise survey of them in the 17th century, and the Napoleonic cadastre of 1830 shows the new developments.

The Water Gardens guide us on an initiatory walk through the art of gardening: the Roseraie of ancient roses, the Carré en l'Île with its charms trained as palisades, and the Chartreuses with their enclosures.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *The remarkable hydraulic system that, through a series of successive spillways, supplies the canals of the "Carré en l'Île," the castle's moats, the mill's diversion canal, and the village washhouse. A system of shovels regulates the flow from end to end*

The Contemporary Gardens

These themed gardens were created from 1985 onwards on the site of the disappeared gardens. They are entered through the Aviary Pavilion, crossing the old diversion canal that led the water to the mill race, which remained in operation until the 1950's.

- ARCADE GARDEN -

A stone bench invites the walker to enjoy the perspective of the castle seen through charms trained as arcades. Ancient and modern roses in garlands of boxwood draw the eye towards the rosary.

- THE ROSERAIE -

The Roseraie, framed by two Renaissance Pavilions, is bordered by the canals of the Grand Carré en l'Île and the Long Square. It features a collection of ancient roses as beautiful as they are ephemeral, since most of them bloom only once, in June.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *Among the countless roses, the Sericea Pteracantha for its thorns, Chapeau de Napoléon for the moss that covers its sepals, and Fantin Latour for its exquisite scent and its hundred petals.*

- THE KIOSK -

The kiosk is a "garden folly" that punctuates the walker's path in a strategic location of the garden and creates a perspective point on the canals. It was built in the 19th century to serve as a small outdoor salon for the lady of the house. It was transported from its original location in the park and rebuilt with the same materials by the castle's gardening team: remarkable work, worthy of a companion on the Tour de France.

- THE POETS' ALLEY -

In the "Poets' Alley" linking the rosary to the chartreuses, an action to preserve birds and the environment has been initiated: 35 birdhouses and feeders are installed because it is increasingly difficult for them to find natural nesting sites. Another action to raise awareness of the interactions of nature with ecology and culture is in place: 35 poems are displayed, speaking of nature, flowers, and love, written by the greatest French poets from the Middle Ages to the present day, from François Villon to Paul Eluard...

- THE CHARTREUSES -

Around 1860, the botanist Léonce de Lambertye, close to the Marquis de Bigny, was responsible for the creation of the chartreuses, a rare ancient architectural structure in France. Overlooking the canals, they are composed of equal rooms connected by a succession of arcades. Their walls, about 4 meters high, are designed to create a succession of microclimates allowing the fruit production to be spread over time.

This architecture is inspired by that of the Potager du Roi in Versailles and the Murs à Pêches of Montreuil created by the gardener La Quintinie for Louis XIV, a great fruit lover.

Extending over 5000 sqm and nestled within the high walls of the chartreuses, five gardens evoke the evolution of the art of gardening in France. Moving from one to the other, one moves from one era to another.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *The two perspectives: one of the five arcades with the statue of Pomona in the background and the other on the canals and the kiosk.*

FLOWER GARDEN

Along the canal, in the shade of a bald cypress and an American oak, extends a long rectangular flowerbed composed of perennial plants.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *The successive blooms renew themselves throughout the seasons.*

SCULPTED ORCHARD

A central alley topped with arches of pear trees, punctuated by columns of fruit trees, roses, and perovskias, is bordered by four beds themselves bordered by double cords of apple and pear trees. This orchard presents the techniques developed by La Quintinie.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *The "palissaded forms": simple or double U-shaped palmettes, verrier palmettes, oblique, fan... The "free forms": the spindle, the pyramid, the candelabra...*

MEDITATION GARDEN

A living wicker enclosure surrounds a yew house and its garden of boxwood and germander parterres. On the wall, a fresco, inspired by Giotto's, represents Saint Francis of Assisi speaking to the birds. It pays homage to four family members who played a role in the recent history of Ainay.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *Among the topiary forms, the yew house, the living woven wicker, and the mulberries strictly framing the basin.*

CLOISTER OF THE SIMPLES

This chartreuse is surrounded by a promenade made in the spirit of the Renaissance with its lime trees conducted in a series of arcades connected by a vault of vegetation.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *Apple trees pruned as topiaries take on the forms of May trees or superimposed trays.*

EMBROIDERY PATERRES

This chartreuse evokes the great era of French gardens, which reached its peak in the 17th century under the impetus of Le Nôtre.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *Trellises, embroideries, topiaries, and white roses are the ingredients of this festive garden. The statue of Pomona, goddess of gardens, possesses all the attributes: the shovel, the cord, the garden plans, the basket of fruits, and the crown of flowers.*

- THE GRAND CARRÉ EN L'ÎLE -

Covering more than one hectare and surrounded by water, it is a characteristic element of the Renaissance water gardens. It has a structure of charms trained as palisades, entirely bordering the canals, and in the center, a "palisaded alley" punctuated by yews that leads back to the park and the rosary.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *Near the bridges, topiaries of yews of various forms with birds of peace have been created.*

The Landscaped Park

Abandoned after the Revolution, the castle was restored around 1860 by the Marquis de Bigny and the architect Chauvez. The botanist Léonce de Lambertye created the landscaped park, the chartreuses, and a vegetable garden in the Grand Carré en l'Île.

The oval shape of the moats, which ensured the defense of the castle, the canals of the Renaissance water gardens that surround the Grand Carré en l'Île and the Long Square of the pavilions, strongly structure the park and have not undergone major modifications to this day.

NOT TO BE MISSED: *Some remarkable trees:*

- *The bald cypress on the edge of the moats, to the left of the châtelet,*
- *The imposing plane tree near the spillway,*
- *The great oak facing the Chapel Tower.*