

Château Gaillard



Les Andelys, Pays du Vexin normand, département de l'Eure, Normandie

THE HISTORY



he rivalry between Richard the Lion Heart (1157-1199), Duke of Aquitaine and Normandy, Earl of Poitiers and Philip Augustus, King of France, leads the former to build a defensive system in Andely in order to keep watch on the river Seine and to protect the city of Rouen from the French.

Overlooking the Seine valley, the castle first called "The castle of the Rock" is erected between 1196 and 1198.

Richard is killed in Chalus (1199) and his brother John Lackland succeeds him to the throne.

As he is known as being weaker than his brother, Philip Augustus sees an opportunity to attack Normandy. The siege of Château Gaillard starts in September 1203.

During winter, women, children and old

people are driven out of the fortress because there is not enough food. They are called "the Useless". They die of starvation and of cold at the foot of the castle because the French do not let them go across their lines and the English-Norman soldiers who protect the castle refuse to let them back in.

This episode is greatly illustrated in a painting by F. Tattegrain on display in the wedding room of the city hall.

At the beginning of March 1204, the French troops get into the outer ward through the chapel and not through the latrines as the legend tells.

On 6 March 1204 Château-Gaillard becomes French and in June 1204 the whole of Normandy, except the Channel Islands, is part of the kingdom of France.

Then the castle becomes a royal residence for Louis IX (Saint-Louis) and Philip Le Hardy



OF CHÂTEAU GAILLARD

(The Bold) or a refuge for David Bruce, the Scottish king-to-be, in political exile.

The fortress is also famous for having been a prison for Marguerite de Bourgogne, who was unfaithful to her husband Louis X, named le Hutin (the Headstrong). She is put in jail in 1314 with her sister Blanche.

This is also the place where Charles le Mauvais (the Wicked) was imprisoned and Charles de Melun was tortured in 1498.

During the Hundred Years War the fortress becomes alternatively English and French and is French for good in 1449.

It is also used as a refuge for robbers, murderers, counterfeiters and plotters.

Henri IV is requested by the States General to demolish the fortress in 1598.

The Capuchins in 1603 and the Penitents in 1610 are allowed to take all the stones that could be useful to the restoration and the upkeep of their monasteries. The demolition stops in 1611.



The ruins of this beautiful fortress were classified as Monuments Historiques in 1862.

Château Gaillard is also classified among the Great National Sites in France.



GUIDED VISITS and ACTIVITIES

The upper court of Château Gaillard is open from 15 March to 8 November.
The lower court is open all year round.



► Individuals

Visit of the upper court without guide

Admission rate: Contact us, free for under 10 year-olds.

Guided tours of the upper court and the lower court (in English on request) at 11am, 3pm and 4.30pm.

Admission rate: Contact us, free for under 10 year-olds.

► Groupes

Admission rate: Contact us

French, English, Spanish and German speaking.

Booking: 0033 (0)2 32 54 41 93

► Schools and leisure centres

Primary schools from Les Andelys: Free

Primary, secondary schools and leisure centres:

Contact us

► "Attack!" activities: 4 to 12 year-olds

Children attack the castle like Philip Augustus' troops in 1204. The activity ends with a fight between the English-Norman and the French with rubber swords.

► NEW in 2009 : Tell me Arnaud and Mathilde

Arnaud and Mathilde are two children who live in Le Petit Andely in 1196. They take part to the erection of Château-Gaillard and will experience the siege in 1203-1204.

Arnaud and Mathilde are shown in drawings to help children to understand the way of life in the Middle-Ages and the history of Château-Gaillard.

After the tale children are able to discover the place.

► Guided tours for teenagers (13/18)

History of the castle, military architecture, vocabulary, the daily life in a fortress.

Château Gaillard

Open from March to November: daily
except Tuesdays and 1st May
10am-1pm and 2pm-6pm

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