



CENTRE FOR THE ARTHURIAN IMAGINARY

Castle and grounds of Comper - a visiting guide

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VIVIANE'S LAKE

YEWS PATH



Informations pratiques

1. Entrance to the library and expositions, meeting point for animations.
9. "La Délicieuse Garde", food truck (summer). / 3. Restroom.
7. Héritiers de la Table Ronde's Camp (summer).



The Arthurian Centre, law 1901, thanks its partners



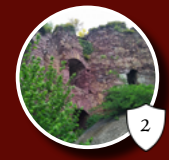
A little bit of History

Menhirs in the woods constitute the first traces of a human presence on the site. The first castle was built in the 13th century. Parts of its fortification were destroyed in the 14th century, and then rebuilt by Gaël Montfort, during Brittany's war of Succession. Passed into the hands of the De Laval family, the castle suffered a long siege at the end of the 16th century. Under Henri IV, the castle's fortifications were demolished. Partly burnt down by revolutionaries in 1790, the castle was rebuilt around 1860 by the De Charrette family. In the 60s, Hélène and Patrick Ferrand acquired the domain. They first hosted the Centre de l'Imaginaire Arthurien in 1990, thus allowing the association to develop their cultural and touristic activities.



GAILLARD TOWER

The fortified walls were erected in the 14th century. The tower is one of the last medieval vestiges of Comper. There were, originally, four round towers, one at every corner, connected by strong ramparts, surrounding the castle. The Tour Gaillarde was the most impressive.



ANCIENT CHAPELLE

In the Middle Ages, the fortified outer walls encircled the main building and various annexes, such as a private chapel. Here, you can see the last of the 12 columns of the chapel, dating back to the 15th century.



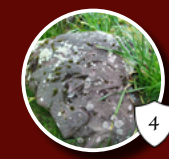
RAMPARTS AND MOATS

Comper guarded the North / South and East / West axes of Brittany, and was known as one of the most important strongholds of High Brittany. The fortification system, with its moats, ramparts, and an underground entrance, is still visible.



THE ROTTING ENCHANTER

Carved into the red stone, emblematic of Broceliande, this sculpture, made by David Vertex, is inspired by the eponymous poem from Guillaume Appolinaire, published in 1909. The poem is about Merlin, imprisoned alive in his tomb by Vivian the Fay.



The park's flora and fauna

Part of the domain is classified Zone Natura 2000. The banks of the lake are home to a globally endangered plant: the Coleanthus subtilis. Moor and forest coexist; moors, with their emblematic gorze, broom shrubs (Cytisus scoparius), and heather; and forests, with their deciduous trees (such as oak, ash, holly, and chestnut trees) and resinous trees (such as yew, juniper, pine, and even two sequoia trees). The lake shelters many species of fish, and kingfishers, ducks, herons and egrets may often be observed near the water. You may also encounter boars and deers in the forest park. A distinguished guest made a noteworthy comeback recently: the otter. Finally, the domain also hosts two protected species of bats: the pipistrelle bat and the small horseshoe bat.



MERLIN'S OAK

Identified as a "Arbre remarquable de Bretagne", this oak tree, known as Merlin's oak, is thought to be about 500 years old. It brings to mind one of Gustave Doré's famous etching, also visible in the library.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE

Introduction to the arthurian legend



The arthurian legend is a compilation of medieval texts about king Arthur, the Round Table, knights and the Grail. These stories about adventure, love and quest of the chivalry perfection have inspired the european literature, art and culture. This legend carries the spirit of celtic epic poems and medieval novels, romanticisme and today's creativity. It's large expansion happended during the 12th and 13th centuries thanks to the work of French writers like Chrétien de Troyes and to the numerous adaptation of many european writers.



In Arthur's footsteps inside the castle, ground floor

The constant presence of the "Other world" besides ours, the prominence of preternatural heroes and fays, enchanted forests, magical waters, are telltale signs of the celtic roots of the arthurian legend, carried through the centuries by bards and minstrels.



CELTIC
ORIGINS

In the Middle Ages, a new type of narrative, the heroic romance, emerges, giving new impetus to these tales and shaping them into their definitive form. Christian culture adds to celtic heritage to create literary works evolving between adventure, the supernatural and the mystic.



MEDIEVAL
LITERATURE

After its great medieval success, the legend loses its prominence, only to come alive again in the 19th century, especially in Great Britain, with a new appeal for the Middle Ages, a longing to rediscover the values of chivalry and enter into a land of enchantment.



ROMANTIC
REVIVAL

Today, the legend has spread to the whole wide world and pervaded new media ; cinema, first and foremost, but also the virtual realms. It touches on medieval fantasy, uchronia, and comedy, and yet, the structure of the Arthurian tales persits.



MODERN
CULTURE



King Arthur's birth

In Tintagel castle, Igraine, Duchess of Cornwall, welcomes her husband Gorlois to her bedchamber. She doesn't know that the man in front of her is, in fact, the lovestruck king Uther Pendragon, transformed by one of Merlin's spells so that he could approach the beautiful Lady. Morgan, the duchess' young daughter, is the only one who sees through the magical deceit. Waiting outside, Merlin expects the future king Arthur to be the fruit of Uther and Igraine illicit affair.



The sword in the stone

Now a young squire, Arthur doesn't know anything about his origins. He happens upon a sword set in a stone. Meanwhile, Merlin, aware that the sword is meant to designate the future king, is about to reveal his destiny to the young man, and become his adviser.



The Lady of the Lake

Clad in white, in accordance with the customs of the fays, the Lady of the Lake guards the legendary sword Excalibur. Sword of power from the Other World, Excalibur is adorned with oak leaves, symbols of wisdom in the Celtic tradition. The magical weapon was carried by Arthur, the bear king, the warrior king, dubbed by the spiritual world.



The dormition of the King

The king didn't die in the battle against his son Mordred, in Salisbury. As he was grievously wounded, his sister Morgan welcomed him to Avalon, where he rests in dormition, a state of stillness between life and death. The fay watches over him until the time comes for him to rise again. Indeed, although no one knows when he will return, Arthur remains the promised King, savior of the Britons in the face of exterior threats.



Legends of the Round Table

inside the castle, hallway and stone staircase



The Damsel of the Grail

The Grail first appears to the young Percival in a procession crossing through the castle of the mysterious Fisher King. The Grail itself is carried by a very beautiful maiden. Both its origins and function are unknown. The Grail soon becomes "Holy Grail" and the obsession and "raison d'être" of the Knights of the Round Table.



The two dragons

The fight between two dragons, a red one and a white one, in a cave underneath the castle of the cruel king Vortigern, reveals Merlin as a seer. The victory of the red dragon announces Uther Pendragon's reign, and that, even more glorious, of his son Arthur.



The knight of the Dragon

inside the castle, first floor



The prophecies of Merlin

Son of a devil, Merlin has the power to know the past and future. Sur cela se fonde un ensemble de textes prophétiques attribués à Merlin qui eurent un immense succès dans l'Europe médiévale et qui finirent par gêner l'Église. L'un d'eux mentionne un mystérieux chevalier du nom de Segurant.



Winchester tournament

During the prestigious Winchester tournament, Segurant bested all King Arthur's best knights. Unfortunately, Morgane has a plan and invokes a devil that takes the form of a dragon and spreads terror. Segurant sets off in pursuit of it as he is mentally linked to the creature by a spell. The Holy Grail is his only hope of freedom.

Armorial of the Round Table

In the stone staircase, meet the heroes of the order of the Knights of the Round Table and discover their coat of arms :



Bedivere



Bors



Galahad



Gawain



Galehaut



Kay



Lancelot



Mordred



Percival



Yvain



Segurant and Emanuele Arioli

We thought everything had been revealed about the Arthurian legend, but the discovery of a lost ancient novel of the Round Table has shook up our certainty. The reconstituted story is about Segurant, the Knight of the Dragon : a best-seller during the Middle Age that mysteriously disappeared.

In 2010, in the Library of the Arsenal, Emanuele Arioli read a manuscript that contained the *Prophecies of Merlin* and the beginning of Segurant's story. The text is unfinished but that is where starts a decade long quest around Europe to find the missing pieces of the Knight of the Dragon's story.



The legend of the crystal palace

hidden in Comper's lake

Daughter of the king Dymas, student of the hidden sciences, Vivian is forbidden from leaving the forest. At fifteen, she meets a stranger, near a fountain, who later reveals himself to be Merlin. Captivated by his knowledge and aura of mystery, she becomes his pupil.

In Comper's meadows, Merlin builds her a crystal palace, surrounded by gardens and streams of water. To protect it from prying eyes, Merlin creates the illusion of a lake around the castle. The illusion is so perfect that no one has ever been able to catch a glimpse of the radiant palace, without the fay's permission.



The Arthurian Centre

and the Heirs of the Round Table

Since 1988, the main purposes of the Arthurian Centre association is to pass on the intangible heritage of the Broceliande forest and tell people more about the Arthurian legend. The association is set up in the heart of the forest, the Comper castle, and has numerous members, six employees and a huge network of artists and university lecturers. We offer every year a cultural season with three festivals, shows, conferences, meetings and exhibitions.

"The Heirs of the Round Table" is a live action roleplaying universe, three generations after the end of the arthurian legend, where you can meet dressed up characters in the Broceliande's forest: join them in workshops, storytelling, guided tours and shows around the year !