THE DELIGHTS IN FRANCE FOR THE TOURISTS

by

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ID 499

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December 22, 1989

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LOIRE VALLEY

The Loire River is the longest river in France, flowing for approximately six hundred miles. This river, with the Cher River and the Indre River, forms the Loire Valley. This is the area of France for dreaming along the banks of the rivers. Dreams of those of the past have dotted the Loire Valley with magnificent châteaux. This is truly the châteaux country of France. This region of France was very popular with the royalty, and many of their royal residences are still there. Many of these châteaux are not only beautiful, but also possess intriguing stories of love, jealousy, and murder.

Amboise

The Château d'Amboise is in Italian Renaissance style. One of the main attractions of this château is the Tour des Minimes which is the five-storey spiral ramp used for bringing horses and carriages up to the château from the river below. In 1470, Charles VIII was born here and began to rebuild it in 1492. In 1498, Charles VIII died from striking his forehead on a low-hanging doorway in the château. In 1560, the château was the site of a gruesome scene. There was the massacre of the Protestants for the conspiracy of La Renaudie. They were hung from the iron balconies of the château. A fanciful visitor today can
perhaps picture traces of blood on the crossed iron bars of
the balcony where heads were hung. Leonardo da Vinci, under
the patronage of François I, spent his last years here. He
is buried in the Chapelle Saint-Hubert.

Angers

Angers is dominated by the fortified Château d'Angers.
The first fortress was built for protection against the
Normans in 851. In 1150, Geoffroi le Bel rebuilt the
fortress. From 1228 to 1238 Saint-Louis built the massive
stone walls and 17 towers. It was considered impregnable in
its day. King René was born in the château in 1409.
Foulquet, the extravagant minister of finance of Louis XIV,
was confined here in 1661 after being arrested in Nantes.

Henry III ordered the château to be demolished during
the Wars of Religion. The work of destroying it progressed
so slowly that when Henry III was assassinated only the tops
of the towers had been removed until they were the level of
the curtain walls. The château presently looks as it did at
the end of the sixteenth century with the 17 truncated
towers. The former moat is now a formal garden.

The Tapestry of the Apocalypse showing the Book of
Revelations is housed at the château. The tapestry was
ordered by the Duc d'Anjou at the end of the fourteenth
century. It is the longest tapestry woven in France,
approximately 107 meters still survives. The tapestry was
woven in the studios of Nicolas Bataille. The tapestry of
The Song of the World of Jean Lurçat (1892-1966) is also worth seeing in the Musée de Jean Lurçat. Its theme is on human destiny and was woven in the Aubusson's studios from 1957 to 1966.

The Cathédrale Saint-Maurice is near the château connected by the medieval cobbled-stone town center. The cathedral has Angevin vaulting with the combination of Gothic loftiness and Romanesque simplicity. It is possible to sample the region's wine at the Maison du Vin d'Anjou next to the château.

Azay-le-Rideau

The Château d'Azay-le-Rideau has enjoyed an intriguing past. The present Château d'Azay-le-Rideau is located on one of the series of islands in the Indre River. The graceful trees and moat surrounding the château gives it an idyllic setting. The Renaissance château has survived without any major remodelling. It has a fine collection of Flanders tapestries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The present château, between 1518 and 1529, was built on piles on an island in the Indre River on the site of an old stronghold. The old stronghold was a garrison housing troops from Burgundy. In 1418, Charles VII passed by, and some of the soldiers hurled insults at him. Charles VII was furious and ordered that all the soldiers, approximately 350 men, were to be executed and the town burned. Charles VII's
wishes were carried out. Only the corner watch towers of the fifteenth-century fortress were preserved and built into the present château.

The present château was built by Gilles Berthelot, a royal treasurer and mayor of Tours, who became involved with compromising deals and was forced to flee and died soon afterward in the north of France. François I obtained the château and stayed there during the construction of the Château de Chambord.

Beaugency

The Tour de César (Tower of Caesar) is the old keep which is all that remains of the fortified castle built at the end of the eleventh century. The bridge across the Loire is very interesting with 22 arches stretching 1,444 feet. The present château was built by Dunois in the fifteenth century in Gothic style. The château presently houses a regional museum. The Tour du Diable (Devil's Tower) and the Tour de l'Horloge (Clock Tower) are the gates of the old town walls which are still standing.

Beauregard

The Château de Beauregard was built as a hunting lodge for François I at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In 1515, Jean du Thier, secretary of state to Henry II and Lord of Ménars, bought and enlarged the original building. In 1524, the king gave it to his uncle, the Bastard of Savoy.
In 1617, it belonged to Paul Ardier, a former treasurer to King Henry IV. Paul Ardier continued the interior decoration of the château and commissioned the very attractive gallery of portraits. The portrait gallery contains 327 paintings and is the largest portrait gallery of famous men. The collection of portraits includes pictures of famous people from the reign of Philippe de Valois to Louis XIII, from 1328 to 1643. The floor is covered with blue enameled handpainted seventeenth-century Delft tiles, portraying a marching army: cavalry, artillery, infantry, lancers, officers, and standard bearers dressed in Louis XIII uniforms. This is unique in that this is the only existing gallery paved with Delft tiles. The tiles were usually used to decorate the walls instead.

The Château de Blois is a melange of different French architectural styles due to being constructed over a four century period, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. The château was originally a medieval fortress belonging to the Counts of Blois. The château became a royal residence in 1498, when Louis XII added the stone and brick wing. His successor, François I, built the Renaissance wing famous for its beautiful openwork staircase.

The interior of the château is excellent with the gilded blue and gold beams and monogrammed wallpaper.
Catherine de Médicis lived here. Her workroom with 237 panels had secret panels where it was rumored that she stored her poison collection. Catherine de Médicis died at Blois on January 5, 1589.

The château was the site for intrigue and murder. Henri III plotted the murder of the Duc de Guise, who was head of the Catholic League, and de Guise's brother, Cardinal of Lorraine. Early in the morning of December 23, 1588, Henri III had the Duc de Guise to come to a meeting. Henri III was deliberately late for the meeting and sent word for the Duc de Guise to come to his chamber. Henri III's henchmen waited for the Duc de Guise in the corridor and stabbed him to death. After murdering the Duc de Guise, they went to the room where the Cardinal of Lorraine was being held and also murdered him.

**Boumois**

The Château de Boumois was built by Baron de Thory at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries of white stone with grey slanted roofs with round towers. The château looks like a medieval fortress with its moats and four towers with machicolations.

**Bourges**

The Gothic cathedral at Bourges was built between 1200 and 1260 and appears to be the largest in France, with five large portals on the west front. The interior is overwhelming due to its size. The stained glass windows are
very nice. Jeanne de France chose Bourges as her retreat after her divorce. She often came to pray in the cathedral. She is buried in the cathedral. She was canonized in 1505. Unfortunately, her tomb was destroyed during the Revolution.

Brissac

The Château de Brissac was built on the foundations of the eleventh century citadel by Pierre de Brézé, counsellor to Charles VII and Louis XI. It is in the style of Louis XIII. It has remained in the hands of the same family since the sixteenth century, and currently belongs to the twelfth Duc de Brissac.

Campigny-sur-Veude

Sainte-Chapelle was built from 1508 to 1543 by Louis de Bourbon. The interior is in Gothic style with ogival vaults and the exterior in Renaissance. The stained glass windows made in 1560-1597 depicting the life of Saint Louis are very nice.

Chambord

François I started building the Château de Chambord in 1523. It took twelve years to build the château with 1,800 men working. He built it to use for his hunting trips. It is the largest château with 440 rooms in the Loire Valley. The interior is beautifully restored and has a fascinating double-helix staircase. There are two intertwined spiral staircases. A person mounting one of the spiral staircases
is unable to see the other person on the other spiral staircase. Louis XIV occasionally stayed at the Château de Chambord before Versailles was completed.

Champtoce

There are only ruins left of the fifteenth-century Château de Champtoce. It belonged to Gilles de Rais who was notorious. He was believed to have tried to find gold in alchemistic experiments. He was also believed to have murdered numerous children whose remains were hidden in the dungeons of his château. He was executed for this. The château was destroyed by the League supporters of the Duke of Mercoeur at the end of the Wars of Religion.

Champtoceaux

The Château de Champtoceaux enjoyed a lively past. There only remains the ruins of the Château de Champtoceaux to remind one of the rogue, Thibault Crespin, who once lived in the château and captured and held the merchants travelling on the Loire for ransom. At the beginning of the thirteenth century Pierre Mauclerc, the Duc de Bretagne, put an end to his practices. The Widow of Charles de Blois imprisoned Duc Jean V at the château during the War of the Breton Succession, and as a result the fortress and town were destroyed.

Chanteloup

The pagoda of Chanteloup was built by the Duc de Choiseul during his exile from the court of Louis XV. He
did not get along with Madame du Barry, mistress of the
King, and she persuaded the king to exile Choiseul, who was
a minister of Louis XV. His exile lasted for four years.
Choiseul modelled the pagoda after the one at erected at Kew
Gardens in England in 1762. The pagoda is fascinating.
Each floor, which diminishes in size, is reached by an
inward staircase.

Chaumont-sur-Loire

The small Renaissance Château de Chaumont presents a
lovely scene overlooking the Loire River with its towers and
drawbridge. It has the appearance of a fortress with its
drawbridge and dungeon. It was built from 1466 to 1511.
Catherine de Médicis owned the Château de Chaumont from 1530
to 1559. Catherine coveted the Château de Chenonceaux,
which was a gift from her husband, Henri II, to his royal
mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Catherine got her chance after
Henri II's early and unexpected death in a jousting match to
force Diane de Poitiers to exchange Chenonceaux for
Chaumont.

The interior of the château is in the Renaissance style
and decorated with furniture and tapestries of the fifteenth
and sixteenth centuries. The château's luxurious stables,
which were built in the nineteenth century, are entirely
preserved.
Chenonceaux

Few châteaux are as lovely or have such an illustrious history as the Château de Chenonceaux. It is a very lovely white château whose dance gallery spans the Cher River. It has a long tale of coveting mixing with jealous passions and love.

Chenonceaux was built from 1515 to 1522 by Thomas Bohier, Controller of Finance for Normandy. François I coveted Chenonceaux. François I questioned the source of the funds used by Bohier to build Chenonceaux. After Thomas Bohier's death, Antoine Bohier gave Chenonceaux to the crown in 1535 to avoid problems with François I. François I occasionally used it. Chenonceaux's history of coveting and exchanging does not end here.

Henri II gave Chenonceaux to his royal mistress, Diane de Poitiers, who was 20 years his senior. She had Philibert Delorme to build the bridge spanning the Cher River. She also had the gardens laid out. Henri II met an early and unexpected death in a jousting match when a spear penetrated his helmet and pierced his eye and neck. His death gave his wife, Catherine de Médicis, the chance of possessing Chenonceaux as she had always wished. She forced Diane de Poitiers to exchange Chenonceaux for Chaumont. It was Catherine de Médicis who had the lovely two-storey dance gallery built on the bridge.
Chenonceaux was almost destroyed during the French Revolution. The Revolutionaries were going to demolish it, but it was saved by a parish priest who reasoned to them that it also served as a bridge. He stressed to them that there would be no communication between the two banks of the river if it was destroyed. Fortunately, the revolutionaries did heed to the parish priest's advice. During World War I the dance gallery was converted into a hospital where more than 2,000 Allied wounded were treated.

Cheverny

The present Château de Cheverny was built in 1634, in the style of rococo by Henri Hurault, Count of Cheverny. He was the son of Philippe Hurault, Chancellor of Henri III and Henri IV. The château has been kept in the family for three centuries. The interior has been beautifully maintained and more modern than most of the neighboring chateaux. Presently it is privately owned and lived in by the descendants of the Hurault family, Marquis de Vibraye.

There is a kennel house on the grounds housing a pack of 70 hounds. The hounds are a cross-breed between the English fox-hound and the French Poitevin. The trophy room displays close to 2,000 stag antlers.

Chinon

Chinon is a charming town with a large medieval vieille ville (old city center). The Château de Chinon is in ruins. The Château is made up of three sections: Fort Saint-
Georges in almost complete ruin, Château de Milieu in ruins, and Château de Coudray in fair condition.

The beginning of the seventeenth century Richelieu ordered for all the ancient feudal strongholds not being used for protection against invasion to be dismantled during the wars against the Protestants. Richelieu ordered for the Château de Chinon to be dismantled. The public was then permitted to use the stones, thus reducing it to an empty shell of curtain walls and some crumbling towers.

Joan of Arc first met Charles VII on March 9, 1429, at the château. Now only one wall with a fireplace remains of the great hall where Joan met Charles VII. Joan stayed in the Château de Coudray in a round tower which still exists.

The king wanted a divorce to rid himself of his wife so that he could marry Anne de Bretagne, widow of Charles VIII. This marriage would ensure that the region would remain part of France. During the winter of 1498 and 1499, Caesar Borgia brought from Rome the Pope's bill of divorce for the king. Caesar Borgia arrived in style with 80 mules carrying his baggage and with trumpeters and drummers announcing his arrival.

Cinq-Mars

The Marquis de Cinq-Mars was a court favorite of Louis XIII. Henri Cinq-Mars was presented to the king at the age of 20. He fell in love with Marion Delorme and married her secretly against the dowager Marquise de Cinq-Mars' wishes.
The dowager discovered it on the ninth day after their wedding. She went to Richelieu to seek his help to reverse the marriage. Henri went to the king and persuaded the king to let him get rid of Richelieu. Henri plotted with others in a conspiracy to also do away with the king in addition to Richelieu. Richelieu discovered the plot and captured Henri. Henri was beheaded and the feudal castle was razed. Only the two crumbling gate-towers remain of the castle as a stark reminder that those who conspire against the Crown during these times, do not prosper.

Clisson

Clisson is a charming little town with a fourteenth-century hump-backed bridge. The Château de Clisson was built by Olivier de Clisson after returning from the Holy Land in 1223. The château is now in ruins.

Clos-Lucé

Clos-Lucé was built in 1477. François I gave it to Leonardo da Vinci. Da Vinci spent his last four years until his death on May 2, 1519 painting at Clos-Lucé. Clos-Lucé now houses a museum displaying models of Da Vinci's inventions reconstructed from his drawings using the materials of his time. There are forty machines four centuries ahead of their time: the first airplane, first self-propelled vehicle, the helicopter, the parachute, the tank, the machine gun, the swing-bridge, etc. with the
reproductions of the original drawings by Leonardo da Vinci.

Fontevrault

The Abbaye de Fontevrault was founded at the beginning of the twelfth century by Robert d'Arbrissel, a Breton priest. The abbey is Romanesque in style. A small chapel in the right transept has the tombs of King Henry II, and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, his son, Richard the Lion-Hearted, and Isabel d'Agoulême. Isabel was married to one of Henry II's sons, King John. Catherine de Médicis is also buried in the church at Fontevrault.

The kitchen of the abbey is interesting. It has 20 chimneys clustered around a central pointed tower. In the kitchen, food was prepared for the 4,000 monks, nuns, lepers, and visitors staying in the abbey buildings.

Fougères-sur-Bièvre

The Château de Fougères-sur-Bièvre was built by Pierre de Refuge, a treasurer of Louis XI in 1470. It is a feudal fortress.

Gien

The Château de Gien was rebuilt in 1484 by Anne de Beaujeu of red and black bricks. It is built in Gothic style. It presently houses the International Museum of Shooting and Falconry displaying hunting weapons from prehistoric days to the present, pictures, and tapestries.
Haute-Goulaine

Haute-Goulaine is a small village on the edge of a marsh. The Château de Goulaine was started in 1480 by Christophe de Goulaine and finished in 1520 by his son. It is built in gothic style. Louis XIV and his wife stayed at the château in 1661 when he decided to attend the States General at Nantes to avoid being in Paris when Fouquet was arrested. During the Revolution it was confiscated.

Langeais

The present Château de Langeais was built between 1465 and 1467 by architect, Jean Bourré, for Louis XI. Louis XI had the château built for protection from the army of the Duc de Bretagne. It is a typical medieval fortified château of the Middle Ages with its great towers and narrow slits for windows. Even the interior doors were made narrow for security so that only one person could pass through at a time.

The interior of the château is interesting. In each room the tile flooring is different. The tile flooring is from the restoration of the château based on fifteenth and sixteenth century designs. There is a nice collection of Flemish and Aubusson tapestries in Gothic and Renaissance styles.

The facade of the château in the inner courtyard is of the Renaissance style. The inner courtyard and gardens are dominated by the ruins of the keep of the old fortress built
by Foulques Nerra, Count of Anjou, in 944. The old keep was one of the first rectangular shaped keeps to be built in stone. Until this time, the keeps were built of wood. The castle passed from the Counts of Anjou to their heirs, the Plantagenets. The fortress belonged to the Plantagenets, the Kings of England, until the thirteenth century. The fortress was destroyed during the Hundred Years' War.

The present Château de Langeais has enjoyed some interesting events. Anne de Bretagne and Charles VIII, her first royal husband, were married in 1491 in the great hall of the château. In the sixteenth century Charles IX gave it to his favorite, Marie Touchet.

Loches

The Château de Loches is now in ruins. The keep was built by Foulques Nerra and is 121 feet high and has three storeys. The only entrance to the château is through the well-defended gates which are part of the encircling stone walls. Charles VII lived here. Charles VII's mistress was Agnès Sorel. Her tomb is in the château and is a lovely work by Jacques Morel. The tomb portrays her lying with hands folded and head supported by angels.

Louis XI was notorious for his cruelty. He kept some of enemies confined for years in cramped cages and others were tortured. In the Tour Neuve is the dungeon where Cardinal Balue was imprisoned in a suspended cage at the
order of Louis XI. Louis XI would go and taunt Cardinal Balue and spin him in his suspended cage.

The town of Loches is quaint. Two gates of the town walls survive, the Porte des Cordeliers (Grey Friars' Gate) from the fifteenth century and Porte Picoys from the fifteenth century.

Luynes

The four thirteenth-century towers of the feudal château combined with the fifteenth-century residential part of château form the present Château de Luynes. Nearby the château there is the ruins of an old aqueduct which was used to bring water to a former Gallo-Roman villa. The foundations have been discovered of the villa with beautiful mosaics. The aqueduct still has forty piers standing and a section of eight stone and brick arches intact. These ruins indicate that there was a Roman settlement here.

Le Mans

Le Mans is the site of the annual 24 hour auto race during June. The cathedral stands at the top of a hill at Le Mans. The present cathedral was completed in Romanesque style by 1063. In 1217 it was heavily damaged by a fire. It was repaired in Gothic style. This mixing of styles has given the cathedral an odd appearance.

Ménars

The Château de Ménars was built in the seventeenth century. It is delightful with its location beside the
water's edge. It was given to the King's mistress, Antoinette Poisson, more famously known as Marquise de Pompadour. She owned it only four years before her death.

Montgeoffroy

Maréchal de Contades commissioned the architect, Barré, to design The Château de Montgeoffroy in 1773. It was built in the style of Louis XVI. It is noted for its very lavish furnishings which have remained almost unchanged since the time of Maréchal. The château stands at the top of gently sloping hill.

Montpoupon

The Château de Montpoupon was built in the fifteenth century with only a thick round tower of the twelfth century citadel.

Montrésor

The present Château de Montrésor was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century by Imbert de Bastarnay. Foulques Nerra had built the first château in the fourteenth century. There are only a few ruins left of the château built by Foulques Nerra.

Montreuil-Bellay

Nothing remains of the original château built by Foulques Nerra. The present Château de Montreuil-Bellay was built in the thirteenth century and enlarged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It rests on the top of
the hill with the village rising in tiers above the valley of the Thouet.

Montrichard

The crumbling square keep of the Château de Montrichard was built by Foulques Nerra. In the twelfth century it was rebuilt. Henry IV ordered for it to be dismantled. In 1755 the keep collapsed.

Montsoreau

The present Château de Montsoreau was built by 1440 by Jean de Chambes, major-domo of Charles VII. Jean IV de Chambes was a chief huntsman for Henri III and directed the massacre of Saint Bartholomew at Saumur and Angers. Françoise de Maridor, his pretty wife, caught the eye of Bussy d'Amboise, Governor of Anjou. Bussy d'Amboise was very conceited and boasted that he had seduced her. Her husband was enraged and made her set up a tryst with Bussy d'Amboise at the Château de la Coutancière. Jean IV de Chambes killed Bussy d'Amboise there. It was this affair on which Alexander Dumas based his story of La Dame de Montsoreau. The château presently houses the Musées des Goums which consists of Moroccan items.

Orléans

Joan of Arc in 1429, won Orléans from the English. Modern day Orléans is an industrial center. The Cathédrale de la Sainte-Croix has nice stained glass windows depicting events form the life of Joan of Arc and the Carolingian
floor mosaic. The Maison de Jeanne d'Arc has period costumes and an audio-visual re-creation of the siege of Orléans. The Parc Floral has beautiful gardens blossoming with purple and white irises and tulips.

Le Plessis-Bourré

The Château du Plessis-Bourré was built in 1468 to 1473 by Jean Bourré, Minister of Finance to Charles VIII, Louis XI, and Louis XIII. The château has thick walls, round towers, and gates defended by drawbridges. It is completely surrounded by a wide moat.

Le Plessis-Macé

The original Château du Plessis-Macé was built in the eleventh century of which only the keep in ruins still remains. In the fifteenth century the present Château du Plessis-Macé was built. Le Plessis-Macé has had distinguished guests, such as, Louis XI, François I, and Henri IV.

Le Plessis-Lès-Tours

Louis XI built it in 1463, and he died there in it in 1483. It presently houses the Museum of Touraine Skills, such, as pottery making, basket making, and other rural artisan workshops. Only a part of the central building still exists of the château.

Rochemenier

Rochemenier is an underground village. The underground village is two to three times larger than the quaint little
village on the surface. The farmers first dug out their farm courtyard, a kind of large crater, the walls of which cave-dwellings and supplementary buildings were carved out of. Some of these caves date back to the Middle Ages. Up to the fourteenth century several dozen underground houses were still inhabited.

Saché

The Château de Saché was owned by the Margonne family during the first half of the nineteenth century. Balzac used to be a visitor here. Balzac wrote Le Père Goriot. His room has been kept like it was during Balzac's visits with a small museum containing memorabilia associated with him.

Saumur

The Château de Saumur was built at the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century by the Dukes Louis I and Louis II of Anjou. The château stands on the hill overlooking the Loire River and the town. In 1590 Saumur became a Protestant stronghold. Under Napoleon I the château was used as a state prison.

The château presently houses two museums. The Musées des Arts Décoratifs is on the first floor in the former royal apartments. The Musée du Cheval (Equestrian Museum) illustrating the history of horsemanship and saddlery throughout the world is in the attics.
Savonnières

The formation of the caves of Savonnières dates from the secondary period. Descriptions of the first cave dating as early as 1547 by Bernard Palissy exist. There are formations, stalactites, underground passages, petrified cascades, and a Gallo-Roman cemetery.

Serrant

The Château de Serrant was built by the Brie family in the middle of the sixteenth century with the designs by Philibert Delorme. Charles de Brie was ruined by a lawsuit, and the original château was not completed. Nicolas Bautru, Ambassador of France, enlarged the château in the seventeenth century. The interior is very lavish with ancient tapestries, the great staircase, and the state rooms whose notable guests have included Louis XIV, Napoléon I and Napoléon III.

Seuilly-l'Abbaye

Château de Coudray-Monpensier was built by Louis de Bournan at the end of the fifteenth century. His wife, Jeanne Sarrazin, was the mistress of the Duc de Bourbon. She had a son, Louis de Bourbon, fathered by the Duc de Bourbon. Her son, Louis de Bourbon, married Jeanne de France, daughter of Louis XI.

Sully-sur-Loire

The Château de Sully was built at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is a medieval fortress surrounded by a broad and deep moat.
Tours

Tour has been an important town in France for a long time. Saint Martin was a Roman soldier who converted to Christianity. In 397, Saint Martin died in Candes and was buried in Tours. During the Middle Ages his tomb was a site of pilgrimage. In 1562, the church in which his tomb was in was damaged by the Protestants. After the Revolution the church was dismantled to make way for a street. The only remaining parts of the church are the Tour de Charlemagne (Tower of Charlemagne), the old clock tower, and part of the cloisters. The present Basilique Saint-Martin stands on a corner of the original site, and the tomb of Saint Martin is in the crypt.

The Cathédrale Saint-Gatien was built from 1170 to 1547, taking over three and a half centuries to build. The cathedral has beautiful thirteenth-century windows and tall arches which gives it the feeling of great height. The cathedral is dedicated to Saint Gatianus. The tomb of the two young children of Charles VIII and Anne de Bretagne were moved from the former church of Saint-Martin to the Cathédrale Saint-Gatien in 1815. The tomb is very poignant. It is in white marble embossed with dolphins. The little girl and boy lie on a slab of black marble with angels kneeling at their head and at their feet watching over them. It is the work of Michel Colomb.
The vieille ville (old city center) of Tours is quite lovely. There are several very nice fifteenth century wooden houses in the vieille ville.

**Ussé**

The Château d'Ussé was built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the Bueil and D'Espinay families over the foundations of an ancient medieval fortress. The château is situated at the edge of the forest of Chinon facing the Indre Valley. This château served as the inspiration for the castle in *Sleeping Beauty*. The château is presently inhabited by a marquis, who is a descendant of the Count of Blacas.

**Valençay**

Jacques d'Etamps destroyed the ancient fortress and built the present Château de Valençay in 1540. Talleyrand owned the château from 1805 until his death in 1838.

**Villandry**

The Château de Villandry was completed in 1536, by Jean le Breton, Minister of François I. The château was the last of the great Renaissance Chateaux to be built on the banks of the Loire. The château is most noted for its gardens. There are three terraces of sculpted shrubs and flowers.

A slide show is shown inside the château of the four seasons of the gardens. The Jardin d'Amour is the garden which is arranged in a love motif. It represents four kinds of love. L'amour tragique (tragic love) is portrayed with
the shrubs and flowers arranged in the shape of daggers with the flowers blooming in deep red. L'amour volage (fickle love) is laid out in the design of butterflies. L'amour fou (crazy love) is not in a pattern but a crazy assortment of different colored hearts. L'amour tender (tender love) is laid out in a pattern of hearts and flames blooming in two different shades of red.

Villesavin

The Château de Villesavin was built by Jean Le Breton, Minister of François I, in 1537. Jean Le Breton was Lord of Villandry and of Villesavin.
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Normandy is rich in history. This was the countryside which gave birth to William the Conqueror. It was in Normandy that Henry II of England set into motion the murder of Thomas à Becket through the utterance of some careless words. Just as the coast of Normandy is home to fashionable resorts, such as, Trouville and Deauville, it has known war and invasion as the various military cemeteries dotted throughout Normandy can attest.

Argentan

In 1170, in Argentan Henry II thoughtlessly remarked, "Who will avenge me of this turbulent priest?" This comment caused four people to slay Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. There are two fine old churches in Argentan which were damaged in World War II.

Arromanches

Arromanches is the easternmost of the D-Day beaches. The Musée du Débarquement displays miniature models of the Allied artificial harbor.

Avranches

In 1172, Henry II of England did penance in Avranches for his responsibility for the murder of Thomas à Becket. Unfortunately, the church where he did his penance no longer stands since it was destroyed during the Revolution.
The site is marked and is called La Plate-Forme. General George Patton in 1944 launched his attack from Avranches on the Nazis. There is a monument commemorating it. The soil under the monument and trees surrounding it were brought from the United States.

Bayeux

The Cathédrale Notre-Dame at Bayeux is delightful with Gothic spires crowning older Romanesque towers. The Gothic stained glass and Romanesque arches inside are nice. The tympanum over the south porches depicts the career of Thomas à Becket. This was the original place the famous Tapisserie de Bayeux was hung. The tapestry was actually an embroidered linen commissioned for the cathedral at Bayeux. It is a long narrow strip of white linen on which cut-out pieces of colored cloth were sewn in the design of men, horses, ships, and incidents of the battle. It is 230 feet long. It depicts 58 scenes of the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The tapestry was almost destroyed during the Revolution when it was about to be used as a cover for a military wagon. It was fortunately saved when a townsman offered to exchange it for a more durable piece of fabric. Napoléon had the tapestry displayed in the Louvre as propaganda when he was planning to invade England. The tapestry is presently displayed in the Musée de la Tapisserie in Bayeux. The museum's audio-visual exhibition
and the detailed information boards give excellent, detailed explanations concerning the tapestry.

**Cabourg**

Cabourg was created in 1860's to be a fashionable beach resort. Marcel Proust stayed in Cabourg before the First World War and wrote of the experiences there in the second part of *Remembrance of Things of Past* and in *Within a Budding Grove*. Proust met his young heroine Albertine, who was one of the pretty girls bicycling through the town and roaming the beach at Cabourg.

**Caen**

Amazingly, Caen has preserved its architectural treasures in spite of the Allied bombing during World War II. The Abbaye-aux-Hommes and the Abbaye-aux-Dames are fine examples of Romanesque architecture. These two abbeys were built because Pope Leo IX refused to recognize the marriage of William to Matilda, daughter of Baldwin, Count of Flanders. Pope Leo IX would only recognize the marriage if each of them built an abbey. The abbeys were built before 1066. William and Matilda were buried in the Abbaye-aux-Dames. William's remains no longer exist since his tomb was destroyed during the Revolution, and his bones were scattered. The coffin of Matilda was hidden in the garden of the convent and later was returned to the church.

The château of William the Conqueror is in ruins. The château has attractive gardens and presently houses the
Musée des Beaux Arts with paintings by van der Weyden, Perugino, and Rubens and the Musée de Normandie displaying local crafts and folk art.

**Coutances**

Coutances has a large and very beautiful cathedral. The construction of the Cathédrale Notre-Dame was started before the Norman invasion of England in 1066. The facade was damaged by aerial bombs during World War II.

**Deauville**

Deauville was built as a planned resort in early 1860's and still today remains a popular resort.

**Dives-sur-Mer**

William the Conqueror launched his invasion of England in 1066 from Dives-sur-Mer.

**Etretat**

The two natural arches hewn out of the cliffs framing the harbor at Etretat are spectacular. Claude Monet captured them on canvas.

**Falaise**

William the Conqueror was born in 1027 at Falaise. At that time he was known as William the Bastard. He was the illegitimate son of a tanner's daughter named Arlette. His father was the Duke of Normandy. The story goes that his father had noticed Arlette while she was washing her family's clothes at the fountain, and that he pursued her,
and the rest is history. The fountain and château are still there.

Gisors

The château was built by Henry I and Henry II of England. It is now in ruins. The curtain-wall of the château with its towers are still standing. In the center of the inside of the curtain-wall there is a steep mound on which stands the octagonal keep. The ruins are now a public garden. The cathedral is built in a variety of styles from Romanesque to Renaissance.

Honfleur

Cartier and Champlain, early explorers of Canada, were natives of Honfleur. Honfleur is a very lovely and picturesque port town. The harbor of Honfleur has been immortalized on canvas by Corot, Courbet, Daubigny, and Boudin. The Sainte-Catherine church is the largest wooden church in France. It was built of oak at the end of the fifteenth century. Interestingly, it was constructed of wood because stone masons were in great demand in other parts of France at that time, and only ships' carpenters were available to build a church in Honfleur.

Miromesnil

Guy de Maupassant was born in 1850 at the beautiful Château de Miromesnil.
Mont Saint-Michel

Mont Saint-Michel has a lovely setting. It is built on a rocky island off of the coast. Mont Saint-Michel was founded in eighth century by monks who built an abbey there. In 966 Richard I, Duke of Normandy, founded a Benedictine Abbey. The original abbey building was destroyed at this time since it was too small. The main section of the Abbey is called the Marvel since it was built in only 25 years, started in 1203. The Marvel is comprised of four buildings containing 100 rooms. On the roof of the Marvel are over 700 arches sculptured differently. Some of the arches were destroyed in the French Revolution. On the roof there is a bench were every Thursday the monks had a foot-washing ceremony in which the seniors washed the feet of the juniors. In 1811, Napoléon took over Mont Saint-Michel and used it as a prison. The abbey was restored in 1863, after the prison was closed.

Petit-Andely

Nearby Petit-Andely the ruined Château Gaillard sets high upon a hill. The château was built by Richard the Lion-Hearted in 1196-1197 to prevent the French from seizing Normandy by coming down the Seine. Philippe-Auguste besieged the château in 1203, after Richard the Lion-Hearted died. The château was able to withstand a long attack until a French soldier climbed up the latrine drains. The château was used for 400 years after being captured. Henry IV
ordered for it to be destroyed to break the power of the Norman barons. It was then used as a free stone quarry for generations. It is a good example of the first feudal châteaux of France. It is in ruins with the massive donjon still standing.

The château has also enjoyed some different moments in history. Two queens charged with adultery were imprisoned at Château Gaillard. Marguerite de Bourgogne, one of the queens charged with adultery, was strangled at the château with her own long hair in 1314.

Rouen

Rouen was named the city of 100 spires by Victor Hugo. The Cathédrale Notre-Dame is the evolution of gothic architecture from the twelfth century through sixteenth century, complete with gargoyles and gables. The crypt was built during the eleventh century. The cathedral was damaged during war but was restored. Saint-Maclou is an excellent example of the later flamboyant Gothic style. Aître Saint-Maclou is its charnel house with its cloister of macabre wood carvings. It is difficult to fathom that the delightful park and Abbey of Saint-Ouen was the scene of Joan of Arc's interrogation. A cross by the modern, boat-shaped Église Jeanne d'Arc at place du Vieux Marché in the center of town marks the place where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. Joan of Arc was tried, condemned, and burned
at the stake on May 30, 1431. Pierre Corneille, Gustave Flaubert, and Jean Louis Géricault were born at Rouen.

Saint-Laurent

The American Cemetery for World War II near the Omaha Beach is at Saint-Laurent. There are 9,385 white marble crosses marking the burial places of the 25,000 American soldiers who died in Normandy during World War II. The Canadian Cemetery is not far away at Beny-sur-mer-Reiers, near Courseulles.

Sainte-Marie-du-Mont

There is a small museum at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont with tanks and landing barges standing outside it. Nearby is the small Sainte-Mère-Église which attained its fame during World War II. It was the site of the first American air drop. On June 5, during the night one man's parachute got caught on the steeple of Sainte-Mère-Église. He hung there while the battle raged around him.

Trouville

Trouville was originally a small fishing village. In the 1830's a group of writers and artists from Paris discovered it. It was in Trouville where Louis-Philippe stayed in a private house before fleeing to England after the Revolution of 1848. Trouville is a popular resort today.