

LE *Journal*

LE ROI DU MONDE

ISSUE 01 · AUTUMN 2026

THE DOCUMENTED HOUSE OF EUROPEAN PLACES

The Loire & *Beyond*

A thousand kilometres of river, a valley of tuffeau and slate, and the long European habit of building, altering and keeping. Read slowly, with the sources named.

THE LOIRE, READ SLOWLY — A VALLEY IN FOUR MATERIALS

NORWAY: TIMBER PALACES, FORTRESSES AND AN ARCTIC GARDEN

ITALY: WHERE THE GARDEN CAME FIRST

HOW TO READ A SLATE ROOF FROM THE GROUND

CHÂTEAU D'USSÉ
INDRE-ET-LOIRE, FRANCE

PHOTOGRAPH CARSTEN STEGER
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Château du Rivau, Indre-et-Loire. The façade seen from its vegetable conservatory. Photograph Aliasse16 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

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Le Journal is the editorial voice of Le Roi du Monde. Source facts, editorial interpretation and recommendations remain distinct and traceable throughout; every photograph carries its licence.

A house keeps a voice as well as a register.

This is the first printed issue of *Le Journal*, and it exists because a register on its own is not enough. *Le Roi du Monde* holds some thirteen thousand published European places, each one entered with its source named and its licence attached. That is a good instrument. It is also silent. It will tell you that a building campaign is recorded in the fifteenth century and that the protection dates from 1934, and it will not tell you why you should stand in front of the thing and look.

So we have made something slower. Every piece here began as a record in the house's own database and ended as a page you can read at a table. Nothing has been invented on the way. Where a source says something, we say it and name the source. Where a register is silent – and the French one is silent on condition, on ownership, on whether you can get in – we leave the silence and say so, because the silences are part of what a register is. Where an institution publishes who keeps a place, that is a source like any other, and it is named where we use it.

The issue runs west along the Loire, then leaves it. Beyond the valley there is a country of painted timber palaces that have survived three centuries of Atlantic weather, a coast of fortresses that were mostly never attacked, and botanical collections maintained at the latitude of the Arctic Circle. Then Italy, where the garden is frequently older than the villa standing in it. The thread is not beauty, although there is plenty of it. The thread is maintenance: the European habit of keeping a thing standing by working on it, century after century, usually without a plan for how it would end.

– *The editors, Le Roi du Monde*



Talcy, Loir-et-Cher. The residence seen from its garden — the relationship this issue keeps returning to. Photograph Asmoth / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

HOW TO READ THIS ISSUE

Three kinds of statement appear in these pages, and they are labelled wherever they are used — exactly as they are separated in the database.

§ Source fact. Taken from a named register or institution, with the reference printed. If it is here, it is in the source.

¶ Editorial context. Our reading. Written by the house, carrying no source licence, and identified as ours.

→ Recommendation. What we would do with it, offered as advice and not as fact.

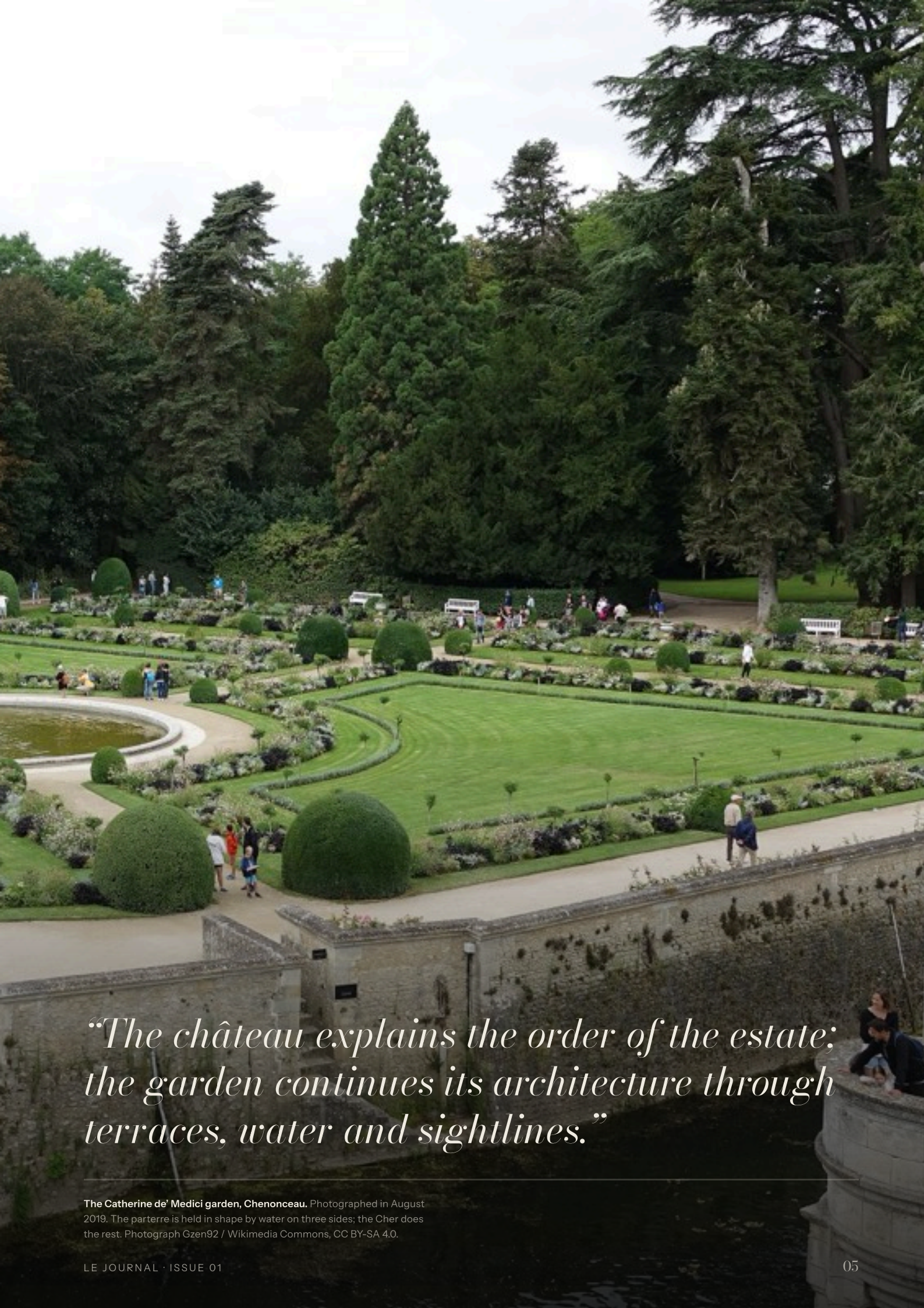


Villandry, right wing. Indre-et-Loire. Photograph LonganimE / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5.



02 — PHOTOGRAPHIC SPREAD

A garden made of water



*“The château explains the order of the estate;
the garden continues its architecture through
terraces, water and sightlines.”*

The Catherine de' Medici garden, Chenonceau. Photographed in August 2019. The parterre is held in shape by water on three sides; the Cher does the rest. Photograph Gzen92 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The Loire, read slowly

A valley is not a style. What looks from the road like one long Renaissance gesture is in fact a geology, a river that could move stone, and four centuries of people deciding what to keep.

The material a château is built from was decided by what could be moved. Before the railways, stone travelled by river or not at all, which is why the geology of French châteaux maps so neatly onto the map of France itself. The Loire is the clearest case in Europe: a navigable river running through a bed of soft, pale limestone, with quarries on the bank and the building site a few hours downstream.

That stone is tuffeau. It is chalky, light, almost white when freshly cut, and it can be worked with hand tools into the fine mouldings, pilasters and candelabra that define the valley's architecture. A mason

in granite country would need a week and a different trade to do what a Loire mason did in an afternoon. The decoration you are looking at is, in part, a property of the rock.

It is also why the valley weathers the way it does. Tuffeau is porous and holds a great deal of water. Water enters, freezes, expands, and takes a layer of the surface with it; the face of the stone comes away in sheets while the mortar joint stands proud. Add two centuries of coal smoke and biological growth and a wall can look far worse than it is – or hide real loss behind a

hard black crust that is actively trapping moisture underneath.

The second rule is that nothing you are looking at happened once. The French register records *campagnes de construction*, building campaigns, and a château listed as thirteenth, fifteenth and nineteenth century is not three buildings. It is one building with three recorded phases of work, and the nineteenth-century phase may be anything from a new service wing to a wholesale romantic reconstruction of what somebody in 1860 believed the fifteenth century had looked like.



Amboise, the terrace above the river. The gardens sit on the platform of a far larger royal palace, most of which is gone. Photograph Velvet / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Azay-le-Rideau, on the Indre. Not the Loire itself: the valley's architecture follows the tributaries as faithfully as the main river. Photograph W. Bulach / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

What the water was for

Every famous image of the valley has water in it, and the water is doing different work in each one. At Azay-le-Rideau and Ussé it is a mirror, placed to double the elevation and to make a defensive moat into a compliment. At Chenonceau it is structural: the gallery stands on the bed of the Cher, and the parterres are held in shape by the river on three sides. At Chinon the relationship is the older one – the fortress is on the height precisely because the Vienne is below it, and the river is a thing to be watched rather than admired.

Read that sequence in the order the buildings were made and you have the valley's whole argument in miniature: a defended site becomes a residence, the residence acquires a garden, and the garden eventually becomes the reason anyone visits. The last step is the most recent and the least secure. Several of the valley's most photographed gardens are twentieth-century work on documented earlier ground, and the honest records say so.

*“One building
with three
recorded phases
of work.”*

The register's century field should always be read as a range, never as a founding date.

SOURCE FACT

BASE MÉRIMÉE PA00098286

The French heritage database describes the château of Villandry, its outbuildings, courtyards, gardens, terraces and water features as one protected ensemble; its principal elements were classified as a monument historique in 1934.

EDITORIAL CONTEXT

LE ROI DU MONDE

Villandry shows why the Mondes need one another: the château explains the order of the estate, while the garden continues its architecture through terraces, water and sightlines.

RECOMMENDATION

LE JOURNAL

Read the protected ensemble first, then explore the individual garden rooms; this keeps the relationship between house, terrace and landscape visible.

A garden that continues the architecture



The ornamental gardens, Villandry. Photographed in May 2012. The present gardens reflect a twentieth-century recreation and later development — the ground is documented, the planting is modern. Photograph Benh LIEU SONG / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The house and the garden are the same building.

Most estates in this directory are protected as a building with land attached. Villandry is protected the other way round. The heritage notice treats the château, its outbuildings, courtyards, gardens, terraces and water features as a single ensemble, classified together in 1934 – which means that the parterre is not scenery around a monument. It is part of the monument.

That has a consequence you can see from the terrace. The garden is laid out in rooms whose walls are hedges and whose floor is planting, and those rooms repeat the geometry of the building: the same axis, the same bay widths, the same insistence that a thing seen from a window should be complete when seen from the window. Walk the paths and you are walking a plan drawn for the house.

It also has a consequence for how honest we can be about it. The ground is documented; the planting is not ancient. What visitors photograph today is substantially a twentieth-century recreation, developed further since, on a layout for which the records are good. Both halves of that sentence are true, and a magazine that printed only the first half would be selling a garden rather than describing one.

The practical reading is to take the ensemble first. Stand where the axis starts, see how the terraces step down, work out what each level is for – ornament, kitchen, water – and only then go down into the rooms. Done in the other order, the garden becomes a sequence of pretty enclosures and the argument disappears.



Chenonceau, the gallery on the Cher. Water as structure rather than reflection, photographed 20 March 2005. Photograph Raph / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Fontevraud, Maine-et-Loire. The valley's other scale: a royal abbey whose arcades order space the way a parterre does. Photograph Juliette Jourdan / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

→ RECOMMENDATION · A DAY ON THE WATER

Begin in Tours, follow the Loire westwards, and allow enough time at Villandry to experience château and gardens as one continuous visit. Keep Chenonceau for a separate morning; the two estates make opposite arguments about what a river is for, and seeing them an hour apart flattens both.

The valley, in the register

Twelve records from the house's published read models, with the département as the register gives it. A protection date is a decision about a building, not a description of it.

PLACE	WHERE	READING
Domaine de Chambord	LOIR-ET-CHER	ROYAL DOMAIN
Domaine de Chenonceau	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	BUILT ON THE RIVER
Château de Villandry	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	PROTECTED ENSEMBLE
Château d'Azay-le-Rideau	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	MOAT AS MIRROR
Château d'Ussé	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	FORMAL TERRACES
Château d'Amboise	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	ROYAL, MUCH LOST
Domaine du château de Chaumont	LOIR-ET-CHER	HEIGHT ABOVE THE LOIRE
Château de Blois	LOIR-ET-CHER	FOUR CAMPAIGNS, ONE COURT
Château de Langeais	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	DEFENSIVE FRONTAGE
Château de Saumur	MAINE-ET-LOIRE	STONE AND SLATE
Forteresse royale de Chinon	INDRE-ET-LOIRE	RIVER WATCHED, NOT FRAMED
Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud	MAINE-ET-LOIRE	ROYAL ABBEY



Langeais. Claudev8, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Blois. Tango7174, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Chinon. Franck Badaire, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Chaumont. W. Bulach, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Source: Base Mérimée, Ministère de la Culture, Licence Ouverte (Etalab), enriched with Wikidata (CC0), as published in the house's read models. Opening times, ownership, condition and access are not in the Base Mérimée, and this table does not supply them from elsewhere.

Tuffeau, granite, *brick*

Why a Loire château looks different from a Breton one after four centuries of weather — and what each material asks of the people who keep it.

Saumur. Stone cut fine enough for a crown, under slate steep enough to shed an Atlantic winter. Photograph W. Bulach / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Villesavin, Loir-et-Cher. Tuffeau country. Manfred Heyde, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Tuffeau — the stone of the Loire

Soft, chalky limestone quarried along the Loire and the Cher. Pale, almost white when freshly cut, workable with hand tools into fine mouldings and pilasters – and porous enough to hold a great deal of water. That porosity is the whole story of how it ages: water enters, freezes, expands, and takes a layer of the surface with it. The face comes away in sheets while the mortar joint stands proud.

What it asks: that it be allowed to dry. Cement pointing, cement render and modern impermeable paint hold water in the wall and move freeze-thaw damage from the joint into the stone. Lime mortar here is a requirement, not a preference.



Lachaux, Cantal. Granite country, Massif Central. Dominique Robert Repérant, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Granite — Brittany and the Massif Central

The other end of the range: dense, hard, almost impermeable, extremely durable. Brittany, the western edge of Normandy and the Massif Central build in granite because granite was underfoot. It does not erode on any timescale that matters.

What it asks: attention at the joints and in the structure – mortar washing out of open joints, movement around openings, water finding its way through a wall with no capacity to absorb it. Because the stone is so hard, granite masonry is also expensive to alter; cutting a new opening is a serious operation.



Westhove, Pas-de-Calais. The north. Leropy, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Brick — the north and the Île-de-France

Brick panels within limestone quoins and bands are characteristic of a great deal of French building from the late sixteenth century onwards, and dominant in the north. Brick ages according to how well it was fired: under-fired brick absorbs water and spalls in frost much like tuffeau; well-fired brick is close to inert.

What it asks: watch the mortar and the parapet. Brick chimneys and gable copings take more weather than any other part of the building.

THE FOURTH MATERIAL — SLATE

Walls get the attention; the roof is where the money is. Slate is laid in courses to a line, and a competently re-laid roof reads as a grid – horizontal courses parallel to the eaves, vertical joints stepped evenly. Where a roof has been patched over decades, that grid breaks up.

Its failures are at the interruptions: the ridge, the valleys where two planes meet, and the penetrations where chimneys and dormers break it. **Continues on page 14.**



Beauregard, Loir-et-Cher. Identify the material first, then read the damage. Photograph Gerd Eichmann / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Two habits worth keeping

- 01 Identify the material first, then read the damage.** Surface loss on tuffeau is ordinary; the same loss on granite would mean something has gone badly wrong. A photograph of a flaking wall tells you nothing until you know what the wall is made of.
- 02 Look at the joints as carefully as the stone.** In every one of these materials, the failure that costs the most money starts in the mortar.

“Before the railways, stone travelled by river or not at all.”

Which is why the map of French building materials is, at bottom, a map of French rivers – and why a valley with a navigable river running through soft limestone produced the most decorated domestic architecture in Europe. The ornament was affordable because the rock was soft and the barge was short.

It is also why the repair bill is regional. A Breton roof and a Loire façade fail in different places, on different timescales, for reasons that were settled by geology long before anyone drew a plan.

EDITORIAL CONTEXT

General guidance on historic building materials, written by the house. This directory does not assess the condition of individual properties, and nothing here is a statement about any specific building.

How to read a slate roof from the ground

A slate roof tells you how it has been maintained long before anyone climbs a ladder. What to look for from the gravel – and what it cannot tell you.

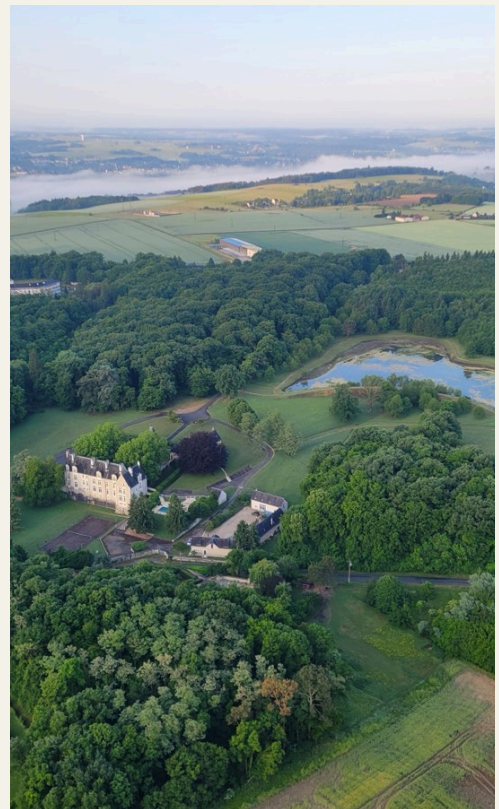
Slate is laid in courses, and courses are laid to a line. A roof relaid competently reads as a grid: horizontal courses parallel to the eaves, vertical joints stepped evenly. Where a roof has been patched over decades that grid breaks up – a band of slightly different colour, a course drifting out of parallel, a patch laid to a different gauge. None of that is a defect in itself. Patching is normal maintenance. What it tells you is how often the roof has needed attention, which is a different question from whether it is sound today.

Ridge, valley, penetration

Water enters a roof where the plane is interrupted, and three interruptions matter most. The ridge, commonly finished in France with mortar-bedded terracotta or with lead: mortar ridging fails visibly, in gaps, missing sections and vegetation. The valleys, where two planes meet, carrying more water than any other part of the roof and usually lined in zinc or lead – you can rarely see the lining from the ground, but you can see staining on the wall below. And the penetrations: chimneys, dormers, finials. Look at the junction between masonry and roof. Vegetation at that junction means something has been holding moisture for a long time.

The wall below tells you about the roof above

Where a roof has been leaking the evidence is usually on the elevation: a vertical stain running down from a valley, moss concentrated in one band of stone, surface loss limited to a single bay. On tuffeau and other soft limestones, prolonged wetting shows as flaking – the stone crumbles back and the joint stands proud.



La Ménaudière, Loir-et-Cher. The view a surveyor gets and the gravel does not. GoginkLobabi, CC BY-SA 4.0.

WHAT YOU CANNOT SEE

The covering is half the question; the structure beneath it is the other half. A perfectly laid slate roof can sit on a charpente with beetle damage, split tie beams or spread rafters, and nothing observable from the ground will tell you about the timber. The same goes for the fixings – nail sickness, where fixings corrode while the slate is still sound, is invisible until slates start sliding.

Classé or inscrit: what French monument protection actually means

France protects historic buildings at two levels. The difference decides who approves your work, what you may change, and what help exists.

CLASSÉ

The higher level, reserved for buildings whose preservation is of public interest from the point of view of history or art. Works affecting the protected part require authorisation from the state and are carried out under the control of its architectural services: specialists in historic monuments, and longer timescales.

INSCRIT

Marks buildings of sufficient interest to make their preservation desirable. Works affecting the protected part must be declared in advance and are subject to the opinion of the state's architectural services. Lighter than classement – but not a formality.

Both belong to the same national list of monuments historiques, maintained by the Ministère de la Culture and recorded in the Base Mérimée – the source of the factual data in this directory. A protection can cover an entire building or only part of it: a staircase, a façade and roof, a chapel, a park.

Reading the notice matters, because “château classé” in an advertisement often means one element of the château is classé and the rest is not protected at all.

The protection also reaches beyond the building. Within a defined perimeter around a monument historique, other building work becomes subject to the opinion of the Architecte des Bâtiments de France – which is why a neighbour's status can matter as much as your own.

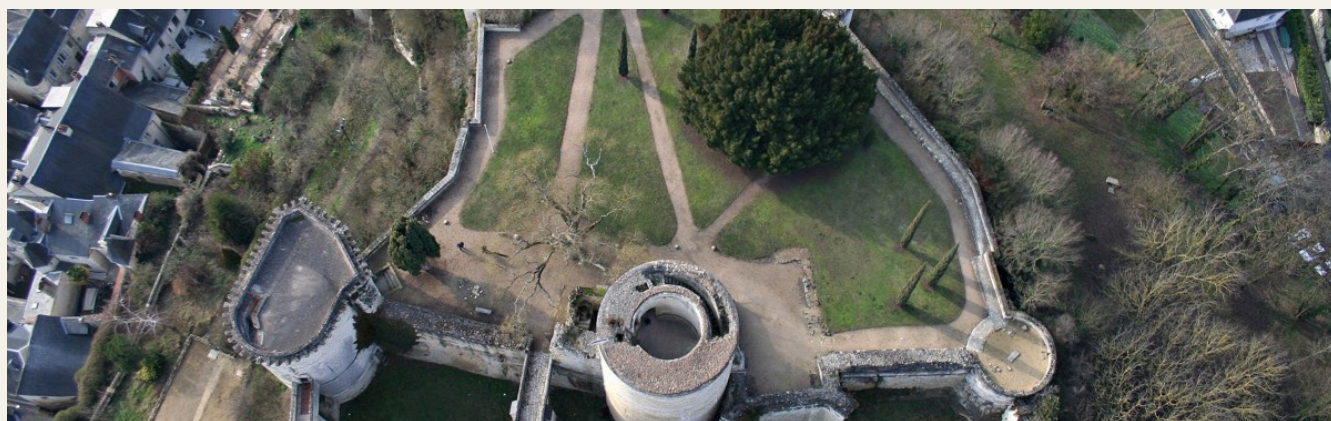
Neither level prevents maintenance. Repair in kind – relaying the same slate, repointing in lime – is normal work. What triggers the procedure is alteration: changing materials, changing openings, changing the appearance of the protected part.

SOURCE FACT

Classé and inscrit buildings can be eligible for state grants toward approved works, and French tax regimes exist for owners of monuments historiques. Both come with conditions – on the works, on how long the building is held, and sometimes on public access.

CODE DU PATRIMOINE · BASE MÉRIMÉE

Source: Base Mérimée, Ministère de la Culture, Licence Ouverte (Etalab). General information about French heritage protection; not legal advice, and not a statement about any specific property.



Fort du Coudray, Chinon. Paths, lawns and planted grounds inside the fortress enclosure. Photograph Mercutio37 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

The timber palaces of the North

Forty-one Norwegian places are published in this house.
Almost none of them are made of stone — and the ones that are
were built to be shot at.

Damsgård Manor, Bergen. Photographed in March 2012; the image predates the current restoration closure. Photograph Aina Catrine Hammern / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 NO.

A palace that has to be repainted.

The largest wooden palace in the Nordic countries stands on a street in Trondheim and looks, at first glance, like a stone building in the French manner. Stiftsgården was built between 1774 and 1778 for Cecilie Christine Schøller, and since 1906 it has been the Norwegian royal family's official residence in the city. Its grammar is entirely classical. Its material is timber, boarded and painted to read as ashlar.

That combination is the whole subject of Norwegian architectural heritage in this directory. The ambition arrived from the European mainland; the only material available in quantity was the forest. So the orders were cut in wood, the rustication was planed into boards, and the result was painted – which means that unlike a tuffeau façade, a Norwegian manor is a building whose survival depends on a decision taken every twenty years or so about paint.

Damsgård, outside Bergen, took its present form in the 1770s for Joachim Christian Geelmuyden and is described by the city museum as an important example

of Norwegian rococo. Ulefos Hovedgaard, completed in 1807 above the waterway that would later be canalised as the Telemark Canal, is exceptional Empire-style work; it was built as the Aall family's summer residence and remained a family home until 2007. Oscarshall, built between 1847 and 1852 for King Oscar I and Queen Joséphine to designs by Johan Henrik Nebelong, is presented by the Royal Court as a major expression of nineteenth-century Norwegian art and craftsmanship.

And then there is a house that matters for a different reason. Eidsvoll Manor was, in 1814, the private residence of the owner of the Eidsvoll Ironworks. The Constituent Assembly met there from 10 April to 20 May of that year, and Norway's Constitution is dated 17 May. The museum identifies the building as an important example of neoclassical architecture. It is also the room in which a country was argued into existence – a reminder that heritage protection is sometimes about what happened in a building rather than how it was put together.



Stiftsgården, Trondheim. Photographed April 2007. Photograph User:Jensens / Wikimedia Commons, public domain.



Ulefos Hovedgaard, Ulefoss. Photograph Orf3us / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Oscarshall, Oslo. Photographed in 2025. Photograph Premeditated / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Eidsvoll Manor. Photographed June 2004. Photograph Kjetil Bjørnsrud / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.5.



09 — NORWAY

Fortress, city, fjord

Akershus Fortress, Oslo. Photographed July 2013. The complex holds Akershus Castle, Norway's Resistance Museum and the Armed Forces Museum; Forsvarsbygg manages the site through conservation planning and maintenance. Photograph Falk2 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Mostly never attacked, and kept anyway.



Oscarsborg, in the Oslofjord. The harbour fort was completed in 1847 and the main fortress in 1853, to defend the seaward approach to the capital. Photograph Kjetil Lenes / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.5.

Where Norway did build in stone, it built to be shot at. Bergenhus stands on the waterfront of Bergen with its history reaching back to the medieval royal centre of the thirteenth century; Håkon's Hall was a royal residence and ceremonial hall, and the Rosenkrantz Tower combines fabric from several building periods in one mass. Fredriksten rises above Halden because a border moved: construction began in 1661 after the loss of Bohuslän and Bohus Fortress to Sweden, and the site is bound up with the siege of 1718, during which Charles XII of Sweden was killed.

Kristiansten was established east of Trondheim in 1681, positioned to deny an attacking army the commanding ground above the city, and taken out of oper-

ational service in 1816. Kongsvinger, approved by Christian V in 1681 and given its own commandant and garrison the following year, was – as the Norwegian Defence History Museum notes – never attacked or besieged at all, despite a strategic position on the Glomma.

Oscarsborg is the exception that proves the point: on 9 April 1940 it did exactly what it had been built for. And Steinvikholm, on its islet in the Trondheimsfjord, is a ruin with a precise political cause – Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson built the fortified residence between 1525 and 1532 and made it his base during the conflicts around Norway's Reformation, leaving the country in 1537.



Bergenhus. Håkon's Hall and the Rosenkrantz Tower. Photograph Nina Aldin Thune, CC BY-SA 2.5.



Fredriksten. From Halden harbour, June 2005. Photograph Ulf Larsen, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Kristiansten. Trondheim, 1681. Photograph User:Arj, CC BY-SA 3.0.

EDITORIAL CONTEXT

LE ROI DU MONDE

A fortress that was never besieged is not a failed fortress. The point of the Norwegian coast is that the works were maintained, garrisoned and eventually inherited – which is why so many of them are now museums with conservation plans rather than archaeology.

Gardens at the edge of the possible

A garden this far north is not a decoration. It is a research instrument that has to survive the winter.

Tromsø's Arctic-Alpine Botanic Garden belongs to the university museum and cultivates plants from Arctic, alpine and other cold regions. Its constructed rock landscapes imitate mountain habitats, built from large natural boulders with their lichen and moss surfaces deliberately retained – a decision that tells you what kind of garden this is. The point is not the arrangement of the stone. The point is that the lichen on it is part of the collection.

Further south, the Arboretum at Milde forms part of Bergen University Museum's living collections, bringing together trees and shrubs from Norway and elsewhere, with rhododendron collections, a heather garden and historic Bergen garden plants gathered at Blondehushagen. In central Bergen, the Museum Garden – Muséhagen – was laid out in 1897–1899 to a plan by the botanist Jørgen Brunchorst as an outdoor continuation of the museum's botanical exhibitions, and remains protected.

What all three share with the manors on the previous pages is the maintenance problem. A living collection is a building that must be rebuilt continuously: every specimen is a commitment to a labelled record, a propagation plan and a winter. At Tøyen, Oslo's Oldemors hage conserves old perennial garden plants gathered from Norwegian gardens – heritage conservation carried out in soil rather than stone.



Tromsø. Photograph Kongharrald, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Milde, Bergen. Photograph Frode Inge Helland, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Flor & Fjære, Sør-Hidle. A family garden on an island near Stavanger. Photograph Kilabs, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Baroniet Rosendal, Kvinnherad. The house was completed in 1665; the formal garden sits beneath the mountains near the Hardangerfjord. Photograph Bohuslen / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 NO.

Where the garden came *first*

In the Veneto the villa was built to look at its own land. In Bologna the garden is older than most of the university around it. And in Rome the garden is the part that was dug up.

Villa dei Vescovi stands at Torreglia in the Veneto, listed as a national monument of Italy and set down in the register with a fifteenth-century building campaign. Read that date the way page 7 asks you to read any century field – as a campaign and not a birthday: the villa standing on the hill today is sixteenth-century work. It belongs to a type that has no real equivalent in the Loire: a house built not to command a valley but to sit inside a cultivated one, with loggias arranged so that the agricultural landscape becomes the decoration. The French château frames water. The Veneto villa frames farmland.

That distinction is worth holding on to, because it changes what a garden is for. In the Loire the parterre is an extension of the building's geometry, visible from the windows and legible from above. In the Veneto the designed landscape and the working landscape are the same surface, and the architecture is the instrument through which you look at it.



Villa dei Vescovi, Torreglia. Veneto.
Photograph Marcok / it.wikipedia.org,
CC BY-SA 3.0.



Castel Gardena, Sëlva. A seventeenth-century building campaign in South Tyrol, recorded as a cultural heritage monument. Photograph Wolfgang Moroder / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Orto Botanico, Bologna. Glasshouses and adjacent growing beds. Photograph Nicola Quirico / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Domus Aurea, Rome. Entrance to the archaeological site. Photograph Rabax63 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

A collection, and an excavation

Bologna's botanical garden and herbarium form part of the university museum system, and their collections developed in parallel: major herbarium holdings are associated with successive directors of the garden itself. The institution sits at Via Irnerio 42, in the city, which is the first thing to notice about it. An orto botanico is an urban organ – a teaching collection embedded in streets, with glasshouses doing the work that a Norwegian winter does differently.

Rome offers the oldest garden in this issue and the one you can least see. Nero began building the Domus Aurea after the fire of AD 64; Severus and Celer designed the residence and Fabullus decorated it, and the buildings were separated by gardens, woodland and

vineyards, with an artificial lake in the valley now occupied by the Colosseum. The garden was the design. What survives is the structure that stood in it, entered today as an archaeological site.

There is a limit to be honest about. The Italian material published in this house is strongest on villas, castles and botanical institutions; the great terraced gardens of the sixteenth century are not yet in these records, and we are not going to describe what we have not yet documented. Eight hundred and fourteen Italian places are published; six hundred and two carry photography with a licence. That is the ground this article stands on, and no more.

RECOMMENDATION

Read an Italian villa from its loggia outwards, and an orto botanico from its labels inwards. In the first the landscape is the exhibit; in the second the specimen is, and the record attached to it is the reason the place exists.

LE JOURNAL

Two Grand Tours

A Grand Tour in this house is a reading order, not an itinerary with hotels. Two are published: one compact, one across a borderland.



Chambord, Loir-et-Cher. Photograph Calips / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

I. From Tours to Villandry

A compact tour that reads the Loire Valley through château, garden and surrounding landscape. The official heritage record places Villandry in Centre-Val de Loire, in Indre-et-Loire, and documents building campaigns from the fourteenth through the twentieth century. This tour treats the estate as a hinge between the architecture of the Loire châteaux and their designed landscapes. Begin in Tours, follow the Loire westwards, and allow enough time at Villandry to experience château and gardens as one continuous visit.

II. Slovenia: gardens, karst and borderland memory

Six places connected through landscape, inhabited heritage and memory. Begin in Ljubljana with the close observation a botanic garden encourages – the university garden began in 1810 under Franc Hladnik, has belonged to the University of Ljubljana since 1920, and has been protected as a landscape-gardening monument since 1991. Move south to Snežnik in Loška Dolina, where furnishings associated with the Schönburg-Waldenburg family remain part of the collection and the castle came under the National Museum of Slovenia after restoration in 2008.

Then the Škocjan Caves, on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1986, where the frame shifts from building to geology. West into the Vipava Valley – small family vineyards, stone cellars, local Zelen and Pinela, a winegrowing school documented at Slap from 1873. Up to Šmartno in Brda, a fortified hilltop village with five surviving towers. And finally Kobarid, whose museum opened in 1990 and presents the Soča front of 1915–1917.



Amboise. Photograph W. Bulach, CC BY-SA 4.0.

→ PLANNING THE SEQUENCE

Use the order as a regional framework and give each stop enough time to be worthwhile. Reserve museum, castle, cave and cellar visits around their own current arrangements, and leave uncommitted time for the village streets and landscapes between them. The Brda hills and the Vipava Valley are distinct places; treat each on its own terms.

Every photograph, with its licence

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“A register will tell you that a building campaign is recorded in the fifteenth century. It will not tell you why you should stand in front of the thing and look.”

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