

## The early Renaissance in the Périgord

### Persisting Gothic influences

A first phase of building ran from 1510 to 1517, during which the round tower topped with machicolations\* was built. The windows are aligned at irregular intervals along the façade of the buildings.

The spiral staircase is in an out-built\* polygonal tower. These volumes still hark back to the medieval tradition, and have low-relief rinceau decorations and letter friezes, the meaning of which is obscure. There are also other patterns expressing royal favour, such as the royal fleur-de-lis and the Savoy knot, associated with the widowhood of Louise of Savoy.

### Loire Valley models

A little later, from 1525 to 1535, features first used on the banks of the Loire started to appear, such as the capping of the large tower and main building, and the skylights topped with pediments. The magnificently decorated chimney stacks are reminiscent of Chambord. There are a larger number of sculpted decorations on these upper parts and on the grand staircase pavilion. There are similarities with Bonnavet Castle\*, where work stopped in 1525, suggesting that some of the artists there may have come to work at Puyguilhem, bringing their know-how and its Italian influences, already visible in nearby Quercy at Assier and Montal Castles, which were also being built at that time.

### Glossary

**Bonnivet:** castle belonging to Guillaume Gouffier, a favourite of François I. Built in the Poitou between 1516 and 1525 but no longer stands today.

**Hercules:** the Roman name of the Greek hero Heracles, embodying strength. He was compelled to complete twelve labours to atone for the murder of his wife and children; the first of these was to strangle the Nemean lion.

**Out-built:** built up against another building.

**Machicolation:** a stone gallery overhanging a wall enabling missiles to be dropped vertically.

**Parliament:** a provincial court of law under the monarchy. The oldest and most important parliament was the Paris parliament.

**Putlog holes:** recesses for pigeons and doves.

### Visitor information

Length of visit: 1 hour

Guided tours in French.

#### Gift and book shop

The guide for this monument can be found in the *Itinéraires* collection in the gift and book shop.

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# Puyguilhem Château

An early Renaissance creation

### Construction

Mondot de La Marthonie, President of the Guyenne parliament\* in Bordeaux, bought the title of Puyguilhem at some stage before 1510. He was a nobleman from the Perigord and legal advisor to Louise of Savoy (mother of the future King François I), and he went on to become the first president of the Paris parliament in 1515. He gained even greater influence at court when François I (1515-1547) left to wage war in Italy.



*The Château in 1880, engraving by Baron de Verneilh*

It was at this time that Mondot began work on his château, marking his rise in society. After his brutal death in 1517, his project was continued by his brother Gaston, until c.1535. The château remained in the family until the 18th century, when the Chapt de Rastignac inherited it. There were several successive owners in the early 20th century, but the building was abandoned and almost fell into ruin.

### Restoration

The château was listed as a historic monument in 1880 and again in 1912 before being bought by the State in 1939. Restoration work was carried out under Yves-Marie Froidevaux, Head Architect of Historic Monuments, and lasted for over twenty years.

crédits photos Société historique et archéologique du Périgord. illustration Tour pour plaire conception Plein Sens.Anders. réalisation Marie-Hélène Forestier traduction InPuzzle. Impression Sipa, janvier 2015.

\* Explanations overleaf

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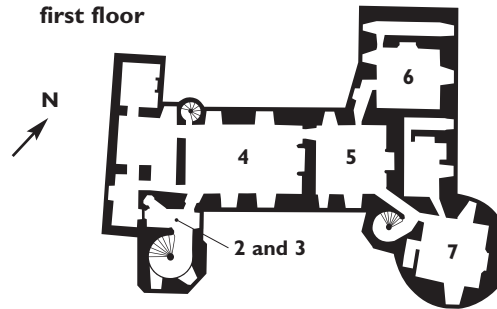
The château comprises three parts laid out in a U-shape and served by a grand staircase pavilion with a polygonal tower. A large fortified tower which still has a medieval look stands alongside the main body. In the 16th century, the château probably stood around a courtyard closed off by service buildings which no longer exist today.

In addition to the ground floor and upper storey, the building also has an attic floor beneath the high roofs, with enormous skylight windows. On the facade the mullioned windows are aligned vertically in a way dictated by interior considerations.

Beneath the roof of the grand staircase, which forms a canopy, there is a balcony with a sculpted balustrade below and two richly decorated skylights above. On the large tower the long line of decorative machicolations\* is a reminder of the original defensive purposes of this type of architecture.

## The grand staircase pavilion

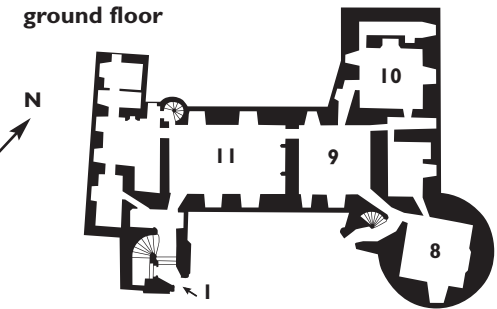
- 1 The grand spiral staircase** is broad and comfortable, and opens onto fine hallways. The one on the ground floor has pointed arches decorated with animals from the medieval bestiary.
- 2 The hallway on the first floor** has a richly decorated coffered ceiling decorated with thistle flowers, salamanders and cherubim.
- 3 The second floor**, which is vaulted on crossed ogives, is decorated with keys from a coat of arms held by putti. A third hallway with a coffered ceiling provides access to the large attic rooms, where the oak roof timbers with their king posts are still intact together with all their 16th-century component parts.



### First floor

The decorations and dimensions of the first-floor living quarters illustrate the new social rank acquired by the La Marthonie family.

- 4 The great hall** is 12 metres long and nearly 100 square metres in size. The doorframe to the lord's bedchamber has flat mouldings forming an entablature at the top. The exceptionally wide fireplace has superb sculpted decoration comprising six recesses with bas-reliefs depicting the labours of Hercules\*. The only original scene, Hercules and the Nemean lion, is on the right. The missing parts have been restored using a different moulding formation in order to mark a clear difference.
- 5 The lord's bedchamber:** the Aubusson tapestry was completed in the 18th century from cartoons by Jean-Baptiste Huet, and depicts a pastoral scene.
- 6 A private room** (dressing room) is linked to the bedroom via a corridor built into the thickness of the wall. It opens onto a small private room for retiring.
- 7 The châtelaine's bedchamber** is in the large round tower. A dressing room with a fireplace and small retiring room completes these apartments.



**The spiral stairway in the polygonal tower** with remarkably sculpted ceilings on each landing leads back to the ground floor.

- 8 The weapons room** in the broad tower gives access to the gun-loops. The fireplace, with a sculpted decoration of miniatures depicting helmeted warriors above a rinceau frieze, is typical of the early Renaissance.
- 9 The dining hall** still has its 16th-century wash basin recessed into the wall.
- 10** Cooking equipment and a collection of old warming pans are displayed in the fireplace in **the kitchen**.
- 11 The lower or reception hall** features two late 16th-century Flemish tapestries with animal motifs.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the large pond in the valley was drained, which changed the aspect of the area around the château.

The elegant boxtree maze was designed in the 1950s. It is evocative of Italian Renaissance garden art.

At the bottom of the broad avenue of lime trees stands a dovecote with 250 putlog holes\*, evidence of the wealth of the lord of the manor.

\* Explanations overleaf