

OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Château du Clos Lucé

Amboise · From 20€

https://chateau-clos-luce.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-Line Tickets & Official Prices



History & Experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Royal Fortress to Genius Lab

GOOGLE 4.5 ★★★★☆ 24 002 reviews

TIQETS 4.6 ★★★★★ 2 080 reviews

The Château du Clos Lucé stands not merely as a relic of the past, but as the **last earthly refuge** of Leonardo da Vinci. Originally a medieval fortress known as the Manor of Cloux, it was transformed in 1490 when King Charles VIII purchased the estate for the staggering sum of **3,500 gold écus**. This royal acquisition marked the beginning of its evolution into a pleasure castle, serving as a summer residence for French monarchs for two centuries. The architecture itself tells this story, blending Gothic stone with Renaissance elegance, particularly in the oratory built for Anne of Brittany.

In 1516, at the invitation of King Francis I, the aging genius arrived from Italy, bringing with him his notebooks and masterpieces like the Mona Lisa. He spent his final three years here, turning the château into a bustling **living laboratory**. It was within these walls that he designed the double-helix staircase later seen at Chambord and planned ambitious hydraulic projects for the Loire Valley. His presence elevated the site from a royal retreat to a crucible of scientific innovation.

The spiritual heart of the domain is the Oratory of Anne of Brittany, adorned with murals painted by Leonardo's disciples. Among them is the **Virgo Lucis**, or Maiden of Light, which gave the estate its current name. This sacred space reflects the deep intertwining of art, faith, and science that characterized Leonardo's worldview. The chapel remains one of the few places where visitors can feel the immediate artistic influence of the Master's circle.

Today, the castle is owned by the Saint Bris family, who have managed it since **1854**. Their dedication has preserved the site's integrity while transforming it into an immersive museum experience. Classified as a historic monument in 1862, Clos Lucé bridges the gap between historical preservation and interactive education, allowing modern visitors to step directly into the mind of the Renaissance polymath.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping through the gates of Clos Lucé feels less like entering a museum and more like crossing a threshold into **Leonardo's workshop**. The air seems charged with curiosity, echoing the restless energy of a man who never ceased to question the natural world. As you walk across the cobblestones, the imposing façade of pink brick and tuffeau stone welcomes you, promising a journey that blends architectural grandeur with intellectual discovery.

Inside, the atmosphere shifts from solemn history to vibrant experimentation. The light filters through high windows onto intricate mechanical models, casting shadows that dance like the gears themselves. You are surrounded by the tangible evidence of genius: flying machines, armored tanks, and botanical sketches. It is a place where silence is broken only by the whirring of mechanisms and the awe-struck murmurs of visitors witnessing **history come alive**.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Practical Information

ADDRESS

Amboise City Center · Access: Car (paid parking nearby) or TGV Amboise station (15 min walk).

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season. Open daily in summer, closed on Tuesdays in low season. Check exact dates before coming.

PRICES

Adults from €20. Free for children under 7. Student/senior discounts available.

VISIT DURATION

Plan for 2h30 to 3h to calmly explore the castle, its functional models, and the outdoor park dedicated to the inventions of Leonardo da Vinci.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed without flash or tripod in the rooms. Take advantage of this to capture the double helix staircase, a precursor to that of the Château de

AUDIENCE

Ideal for curious families and science enthusiasts. Children particularly enjoy the interactive models and the botanical garden.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & Transportation



Car

Amboise Train Station (rear) (8 min) · Tours - Val de Loire Airport (72 min)



Bike

Amboise Station (rear) (9 min) · Tours - Val de Loire Airport (97 min)



On foot

Amboise Station (rear) (19 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Château du Clos Lucé ?



📍 2 Rue du Clos Lucé — 37400 Amboise

🌐 47°24.615′ N, 0°59.530′ E

ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Castle and Park

Ground Floor (Castle Interior)

This level houses the core historical spaces, including Leonardo's bedroom and the Renaissance Hall. Here, you encounter the intimate living quarters and the original architecture modified by Charles VIII. The Salle des Maquettes introduces you to functional models of his inventions, bridging the gap between sketch and reality.

Upper Levels & Oratory

Ascend to discover the Oratory of Anne of Brittany, featuring the famous Virgo Lucis mural. These upper rooms provide insight into the spiritual and domestic life of the castle's inhabitants. The view from the towers offers a glimpse of the landscape that inspired Leonardo's hydrological studies.

Outdoor Park & Island of War

The visit extends outdoors to the botanical garden and the Island of War. Here, full-scale replicas of military machines and agricultural tools stand amidst lush greenery. This open-air section allows for physical interaction with large mechanisms, providing a spectacular perspective on Leonardo's engineering prowess.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Accessibility for people with reduced mobility**

Access partially limited due to medieval architecture (stairs), please check with the ticket office.

Families

Very family-friendly site with manipulable models and an outdoor park suitable for children.

Audio guide

French, English, Spanish, German



Must-sees

SELECTION

Essential Inventions and Artistic Treasures

01 Central Tower

Double-Helix Staircase

This architectural marvel features two independent ramps winding around each other without ever meeting. It is a precursor to the famous staircase at Chambord, showcasing Leonardo's mastery of spatial geometry. Visitors can climb both sides simultaneously, experiencing the **interwoven ramps** firsthand.

> 💡 Leonardo designed this structure to allow people to pass each other unseen, a concept of privacy and efficiency that was revolutionary for its time.

02 Model Room

Primitive Helicopter

A functional model of Leonardo's aerial screw, demonstrating his early theories on flight. The spiral design mimics the shape of a snail shell, reflecting his observation of nature. Turning the crank reveals the potential lift generated by the rotating blades, making mechanics **tactile and accessible**.

> 💡 Though too heavy to fly with human power alone, this design laid the groundwork for modern helicopter technology centuries later.

03 Island of War

Armored Tank

Located in the outdoor park, this full-scale replica of Leonardo's armored vehicle is a striking sight. Designed to break enemy lines, it features cannons hidden beneath a protective shell. Children and adults alike can operate the controls, understanding the **military ingenuity** behind the invention.

> 💡 Historians debate whether this tank was a genuine proposal or a hoax designed to deceive potential spies who might steal the plans.

04 Behind the Castle

Botanical Garden

Often overlooked, this garden contains plants studied by Leonardo for their medicinal and structural properties. It serves as a living library of his biological research, connecting art with botany. Walking among these species offers a serene moment to reflect on his **holistic approach** to science.

> 💡 Leonardo believed that studying plant growth could inform architectural designs, seeking patterns in nature to improve human structures.

05 DISCIPLES OF LEONARDO Chapel

Oratory of Anne of Brittany

This Gothic chapel features stunning murals, including the Virgo Lucis, which gives the castle its name. The artwork reflects the artistic style influenced by Leonardo's presence in Amboise. It is a peaceful sanctuary that highlights the **spiritual dimension** of the Renaissance court.

> 💡 The name 'Clos Lucé' is derived from 'Lucis,' meaning light, referencing the radiant depiction of the Virgin Mary in the mural.

06 Model Room

Paddle Steamer Model

A working model of Leonardo's boat propelled by paddles, demonstrating his interest in naval engineering. The mechanism shows how rotational motion can be converted into linear thrust. It illustrates his ability to apply theoretical concepts to **practical transportation** solutions.

> 💡 This design anticipated modern paddle steamers by nearly four centuries, showcasing Leonardo's forward-thinking vision.

07 Renaissance Hall

Ideal City Plans

Displays showing Leonardo's urban planning concepts, including multi-level cities and canal systems. These plans aimed to improve hygiene and traffic flow in crowded towns. They reveal his concern for public health and **urban sustainability** long before such terms existed.

> 💡 His designs included separate levels for pedestrians and vehicles, a concept that modern cities are only now beginning to implement.

08 Private Quarters

Leonardo's Bedroom

Recreated based on historical records, this room offers an intimate glimpse into the daily life of the genius. Simple furnishings contrast with the complexity of his mind, emphasizing his focus on work over luxury. It invites visitors to imagine the quiet moments of **reflection and creation**.

> 💡 Despite his fame, Leonardo lived modestly here, dedicating most of his time to study rather than social festivities.

TIPS

Maximizing Your Renaissance Experience

TIMING

Arrive right at opening time to avoid crowds, especially in the model room. Before 10 AM, you can take photos without obstruction and enjoy a calmer atmosphere.

BILLET

Book tickets online in advance to save time and money. This guarantees entry during peak summer months and avoids long queues at the ticket office.

PARCOURS

Start with the indoor castle tour, then move to the outdoor park. This logical flow prevents fatigue and allows you to end with the impressive full-scale machines.

PHOTO

Capture the double-helix staircase from below to emphasize its height and complexity. Photography is allowed without flash, so take advantage of this unique opportunity.

PAUSE

Take a break in the botanical garden or at a nearby café in Amboise center. The visit is physically engaging, so a rest stop helps maintain energy for the second half.

ENFANTS

Encourage children to handle the interactive models. The tactile experience makes complex mechanics fun and educational, keeping them engaged throughout the visit.

AUDIOGUIDE

Rent the audio guide available on-site. It provides essential context for the scientific principles behind each invention, enhancing understanding significantly.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable shoes suitable for uneven historical floors and paved outdoor paths. The combination of indoor stairs and outdoor terrain requires sturdy footwear.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Is it better to book tickets online?

Yes, online booking is highly recommended to avoid queues, especially during peak summer season. It guarantees your access even in case of saturation and sometimes allows you to save a few euros. You will receive your ti

How far in advance can I cancel?

Most tickets purchased online offer free cancellation up to 24h or 48h before the visit date. Check specific conditions at purchase, as they may vary depending on promotional offers. This gives you valuable flexibility i

Is there a promotion currently running?

Reduced rates are regularly offered for groups, large families, or young Europeans. Check the official offers page to find the best discount periods. Sometimes, annual passes allow you to visit the site and park multiple

Can I buy tickets on-site?

Yes, purchasing at the ticket office is possible, but not recommended during high traffic periods (July-August). Ticket offices usually open 30 minutes before the site opens. By booking online, you save precious time and

How long does it take to visit Clos Lucé?

Allow approximately 2h30 to 3h to fully enjoy the castle, interactive galleries, and outdoor park. This timeframe allows you to read the notices, manipulate the models, and stroll through the botanical garden without str

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The Name's Origin

The name Clos Lucé comes from the **Virgo Lucis** mural in the oratory. Painted by Leonardo's disciples, it depicts the Maiden of Light, symbolizing the spiritual illumination associated with the site.

Royal Investment

Charles VIII paid **3,500 gold écus** for the estate in 1490. This substantial investment signaled the transformation of the fortress into a prestigious royal residence.

Family Continuity

The Saint Bris family has owned the castle since **1854**. Their long-term stewardship ensures consistent preservation and cultural enhancement of the site.

Last Refuge

Leonardo died here on May 2, 1519, after **three years** of intensive research. This period was crucial for his final inventions and artistic reflections.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Amboise offers a perfect complement to your visit at Clos Lucé. Just a short walk away, the **Royal Castle of Amboise** houses the tombs of Leonardo and Francis I, offering panoramic views of the Loire River. For a relaxing afternoon, stroll along the **Loire Riverbank** to watch the sunset illuminate the opposite castles. Afterward, dine at **Restaurant La Table d'Amboise** for traditional local cuisine in a warm atmosphere. Don't miss the quirky Museum of Magic nearby, which provides a playful contrast to the scientific rigor of Clos Lucé.

Leaving Clos Lucé, you carry more than just photographs; you carry a renewed sense of wonder. This is not just a visit to a castle, but an immersion into the **mind of a visionary**. Whether you are drawn by art, engineering, or history, the experience leaves an indelible mark, reminding us that creativity knows no bounds. It is a pilgrimage for anyone who believes that the future is shaped by those who dare to dream.