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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Half moon | 8 Entrance to the park |
| 2 Reception - shop | 9 Upper Terrace - Charmille |
| 3 Terrace of the Florentine Fountains | 10 Terrace of Léda |
| 4 Troglodyte Chapel | 11 Terrace of Anduzian vases |
| 5 Site of the old Château | 12 Kitchen Garden |
| 6 Petit Valmer | 13 Gallery of the gourds – Orchard |
| 7 Toilets | 14 Moat |

In a striking setting, on a hillside planted with the vines of the Vouvray appellation contrôlée, you will discover – over twelve acres – a succession of terraces decorated with balustrades, fountains, vases and topiary, inspired by the villas of the Italian Renaissance.

Laid out along two major axes the gardens follow the natural gradients of the hillside. Their designer has cleverly taken advantage of the slope of a spur between two valleys. The north south axis begins in the majestic avenue of chestnut trees planted in double rows and opening onto the **Half moon (1)** at the entrance gate. It continues into the front terrace, which is flanked by three outbuildings (1650). Two *Saphora japonica* 'Pendula' frame the view and drape their branches elegantly to the bottom of the moat. A bridge over the moat gives access to the **Terrace of the Florentine fountains (3)** with its borders of annual plants.

During the month of April the tree peonies are in flower, followed by the wisteria and then the 'Pierre de Ronsard' roses.

On the right, in the large wall underneath a statue of Saint Roch, you will find the **troglodyte chapel (4)**. Master Jehan Binet, head of the king's household, had it carved out from the tufa rock in 1524.

The chapel consists of two unequal naves each with two bays vaulted with two diagonal ribs. A small sanctuary extends the principle nave with an altar whose base is decorated with a triptyque (classified as an Historic Monument) representing the Pieta flanked by two figures: on the left, the donor Jean Bernard, Bishop of Tours from 1441 to 1466, on the right his nephew Guy both with their coats of arms.

The side chapels contain an altar in painted wood and a Roman baptismal font. Two stained glass windows from the sixteenth century picture the healing of a woman possessed and the miracle of the spider.

The main château (5) was destroyed by fire in October 1948. Alix de Saint Venant has created a faithful representation of the château, in clipped yew, on the original base. **The Petit Valmer (6)** was built in 1647 and is a fine example of the architecture of the period.

The east west, axis begins on the **Upper Terrace (9)** with its Charmille of clipped hornbeam and a stone column from the Château of Chanteloup. Access to the upper terrace is round the massive two hundred year old cedar. From the upper terrace you can survey the gardens, the countryside and, to the south, the dovecote and the vineyard.

The Terrace of Léda (10) was restored in 1999 to its seventeenth century design with walls covered in chasselas grape vines and perfumed, drought tolerant plants – iris, lavenders, guaras. Topiary of myrtle leaved Portuguese laurels line the west wall. Poet's narcissi, 'Marie Pavie' and 'Avon' roses and 'Diana' hibiscus edge the expanses of lawn. From here you descend towards the kitchen garden via the **Terrace of Anduzian Vases (11)**. The walls are punctuated with large buttresses of yew in between which the pink panicles of *Lagerstroemia indica* 'Soir d'Eté' and abelias flower throughout the summer. Under the stone staircase you will find a statue of Saint Fiacre, the patron saint of gardeners.

The restoration of the **kitchen garden (12)** began in 2000 and it has become, after extensive research, a garden for the conservation of plants - for food, for aroma, for flavouring and for medicinal purposes. Within the enclosing walls, of sixteenth century design, are more than a thousand varieties of plants. An insect house has been built next to the greenhouses.

Passing the 'donkey tower', you enter an ancient orchard now divided into four quarters and sown with flowering prairie plants. A collection of sculptures is placed along the north wall, parallel with which is the **Gallery of the Gourds (13)** covered, from the middle of the summer until the autumn, in hundreds of plants of the gourd family. It is the official national collection of the *Lagenaria siceraria*, recognised by the Conservatoire Français des Collections Végétales Spécialisées (CCVS). The gallery leads to the dry moat.

The moat (14), planted in 1979, forms a separate garden, part shady and part sunny, accessed above, from under the large pruned yew in the corner of the Terrace of Léda, by an interesting spiral staircase dating from the fifteenth century. In the shadow of the north facing wall is a collection of hydrangeas: the climbing hydrangeas include *Schizophragna hydrangoides* with elliptical pale pink flowers, *Pileostegia viburnoides* and *Deumaria sinensis*, rare evergreens with fragrant white flowers. Among the bush hydrangeas are *Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Snow Queen', *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' and *Hydrangea aspera* var. *sargentiana* with immense velvety leaves. On the sunny side, in the month of March, you have the flowering of the scented *Osmanthus x burkwoodii*, followed by the green, white and pink leaves of the *Actinidia kolonikta*. Then the Mexican Orange and the Indian Lilac blossom among predominantly grey and blue perennial plants.

The design of **The Park (8)**, enclosed by walls and covering an area of sixty acres, has remained intact since the seventeenth century. Oaks and hornbeam dominate accompanied by the chestnuts and the wild cherries which produce such splendid colours in the autumn. Two great axes on the side of the hill lead to circles decorated by columns originating from the ancient château of Chanteloup. Along the way you will see structures such the Belvedere of three brick arches and a Vide-bouteille, a charming little construction in brick and stone dedicated to the consumption of the products of local vineyards. Over several years an arboretum has been established with the introduction of rare trees and bushes.

Valmer is a "Garden amongst the Vines", so on returning to the shop, you can sample the Vouvray wine of the Châteaux de Valmer and purchase unusual seeds as a reward for and souvenir of your long promenade across the Terraces.

Ensemble **Inscrit à l'Inventaire Supplémentaire des Monuments Historiques** en 1930
et labellisé **Jardin Remarquable** en 2004 par le ministère de la Culture.

Prix du plus beau jardin APJRC 2002
Prix Champagne Henriot VMF 2003
Prix spécial du Jury SNHF Jardins Potagers 2004
Prix European Boxwood and Topiary Society EBTS 2008

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