



Les festins de **CHAMBORD**

PRESS KIT

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2027



A table !



Under the High Patronage of
Mr Emmanuel MACRON
President of the French Republic



Les festins de
CHAMBORD



Curators

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Scientific Committee

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Francis CHEVRIER, founder and director of the European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food (Tours), and director of Les Rendez-vous de l'Histoire Festival in Blois.

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Introduction

In 2026, visitors are invited to dine at the table of Chambord Castle!

From 26 September 2026 to 24 January 2027, the Domaine national de Chambord presents an exceptional exhibition devoted to the château's gastronomic history from the 16th century to the present day. Co-curated by the Domaine national de Chambord and the European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food (IEHCA), it is the institution's largest exhibition since 2019.

Four arms of a cross, four feasts. Beneath the carved vaults of the second floor of the keep, facing the famous double-spiral staircase, visitors discover meticulous reconstructions of four tables: a supper that Francis I might have offered in honor of Emperor Charles V on 18 December 1539; a dinner for 30 guests offered during the Sun King's (Louis XIV) last stay in September 1685; the after-dinner service of exotic drinks in the reconstructed coffee room of the Marshal of Saxe in 1750; and the gala dinner held in honor of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales on 9 November 1988.

Works and documents from Chambord's collections, as well as those from partner cultural institutions, are displayed alongside the reconstructions to explain the context and course of these feasts.

The exhibition experimentally recreates spectacular Renaissance and Grand Siècle silverware through 3D modeling and the printing of old drawings. *The Feasts of Chambord* corrects the image of a deserted Chambord, without inhabitants or activity, a cliché that is far too simplistic.

Accessible to all visitors of the castle at no extra charge, the exhibition and its mediation program also explore the evolution of eating habits, manners, and table arts, with a sensory approach.

The Feasts of Chambord addresses a popular, timeless, and unifying theme and contributes, as the French Presidency notes in granting its high patronage, to the international influence of French heritage and excellence, especially in gastronomy.



I - The feasts of Chambord: a journey through the centuries

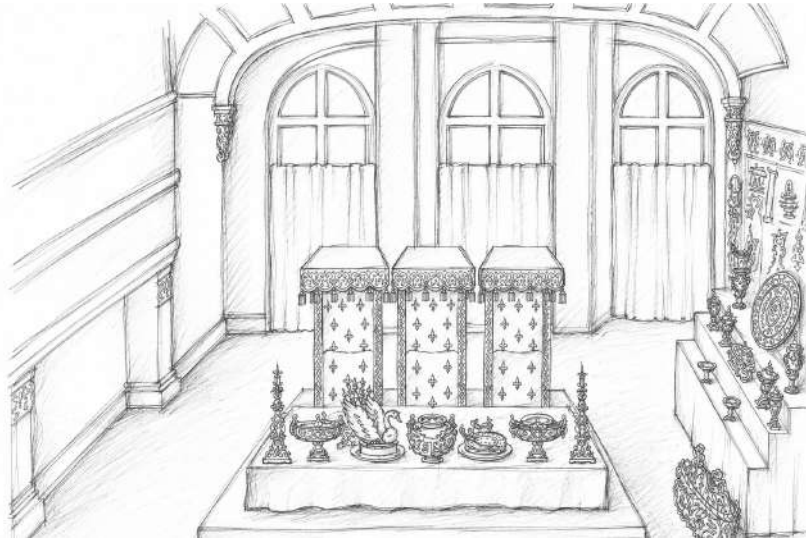
Beneath the sculpted vaults of the second floor of the keep, visitors explore four centuries of culinary practices. Four banquet tables are reimagined or reconstructed through the expertise of a scientific committee, loans from French and international institutions, immersive exhibition design, and the contributions of innovative companies.

The banquet tables

The scenography is built around the architecture of the castle: the four arms of the cross-shaped second floor around the double-spiral staircase naturally call for a new staging, a passage into another era.

Opulence and ornamentation are central: large gilded doors, true “gates of time,” punctuate the route as symbolic thresholds between periods. The abundance of materials, richness of decoration, and accumulation of objects help restore the spectacular and sensory dimension of Chambord's feasts.





Working sketch

The 16th-century table

Visitors are first immersed in a supper that would have taken place in 1539 during the visit of Francis I and Emperor Charles V.

On December 18, 1539, Charles V and Francis I arrived at Chambord. The keep had been lavishly prepared for the arrival of these distinguished guests. Although surviving sources are too fragmentary to mention the holding of a grand banquet, this exhibition offers an interpretation of such a supper based on historical iconography and common 16th-century practices. On the sovereigns' table and the ceremonial sideboard, pieces of royal goldsmithing and silverware are brought back to life.

Most furnishings and tableware from this period have either disappeared or survive only in drawings. Through an experimental and innovative 3D reconstruction process, this tableware has been recreated and can now be presented to the public. Dishes are displayed with cuts of meat to make the scene more vivid and lifelike. Music and fragrances also play a full role in creating this immersive experience.



Two Salt Cellars from Dessins d'aiguières, etc., no. 3

Designed by Léonard Thiry (c. 1500-c. 1550) and engraved René Boyvin (1525 - c. 1625) 1550-1560

Engraving
CC0 Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New-York
© Bequest of Herbert Mitchell, 2008



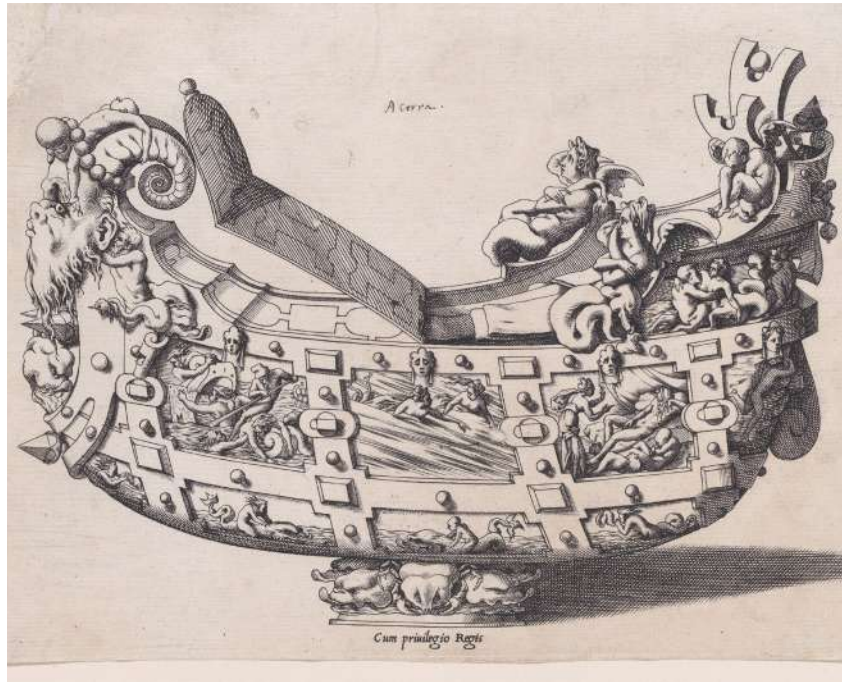
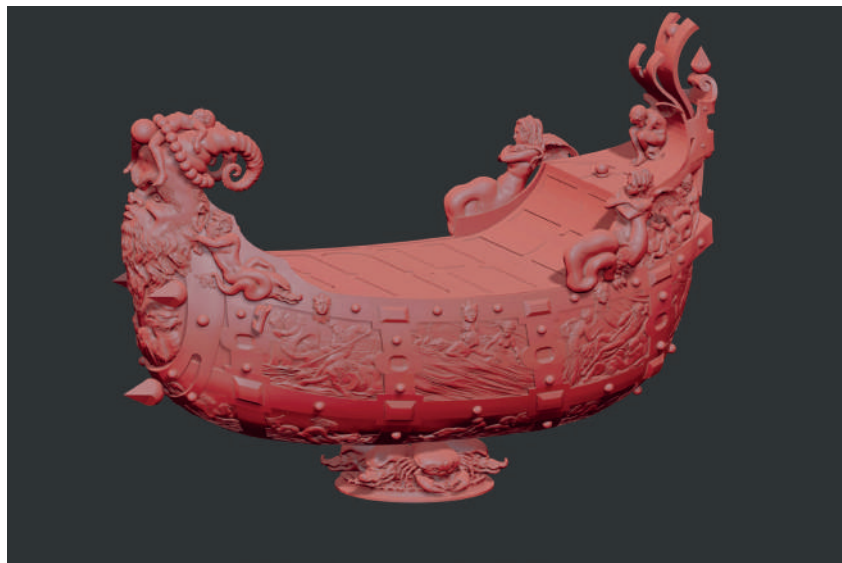


Table ship (Nef), Goldsmith's work
 [Source for the 3D reconstructions]
 Designed by Léonard Thiry (c. 1500-c. 1550) and engraved René Boyvin
 (1525 - c. 1625)
 1550-1560
 Format: 9 leaves of copperplate engravings; burin engraving
 Bibliothèque de l'INHA (Paris), 4 RES 59
 CC0 Institut national d'Histoire de l'Art



3D reconstruction of the table ship by Aristéas

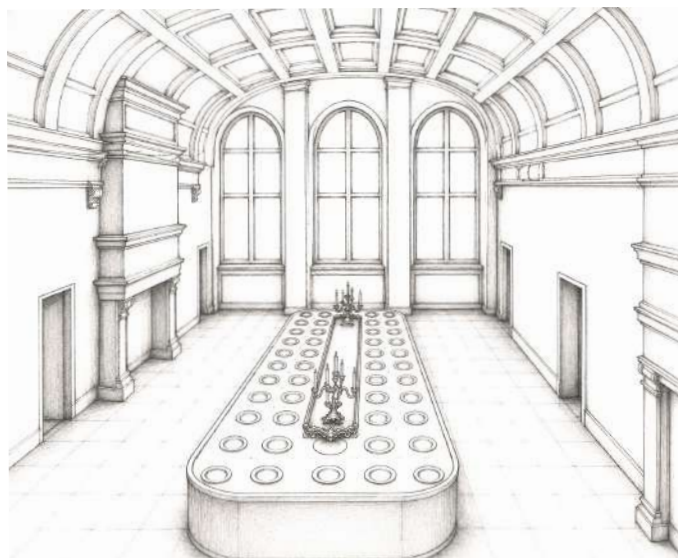


Pouilly-sur-Meuse Treasure: footed cup and faceted-handle spoons
 16th century
 Partially gilded silver
 Musée lorrain de Nancy, accession nos. 2009.1.4 and 2009.1.16-2009.1.19
 © Palais des ducs de Lorraine – Musée Lorrain, Nancy / photo. Jean-Yves Lacôte



Basket
 Designed by Léonard Thiry (c. 1500-c. 1550) and engraved by René Boyvin (1525 - vers 1625)
 1550-1560
 Engraving on paper
 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum (New-York, USA), 18286181
 CC0 Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum





Working sketch

The 17th-century table

The same approach is used to recreate the table for a “dinner” (luncheon) for thirty guests, held in September 1685 during Louis XIV’s final stay at Chambord.

The reconstruction of the tableware objects is based on drawings of dishes used at the court of Louis XIV at Versailles, as well as an original table plan annotated by the Prince of Condé, preserved at the National Library of France. In contrast to the Renaissance supper, this meal illustrates the service of starters and soups during a meatless day, with the “service à la française” still governing—and more than ever defining—the order of meals.

To enhance immersion, artificial resin dishes were created by the company COBALT FX to fill the platters. The workshop produced fifty-six starter and soup dishes based on historical recipes, bringing the table of the Sun King (1685) to life.



Arrival of Louis XIV at Chambord

Adam Frans van der Meulen (1632-1690) or workshop of the artist

Third quarter of the 17th century

Oil on canvas

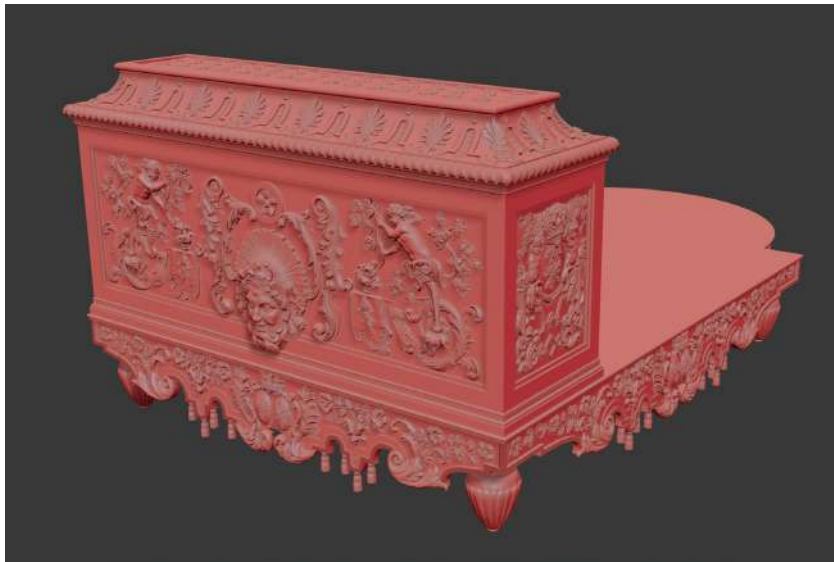
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0850

© Domaine national de Chambord





Drawing of Louis XIV's golden padlock (cutlery box)
 Attributed to Jean Bérain I (1640-1711); formerly attributed to
 Nicolas-Ambroise Cousinet (1696-1715)
 1703 ?
 Drawing on paper
 Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (collection Tessin-Hårleman), NMH THC 809
 CCØ Nationalmuseum, Stockholm / Photo Cecilia Heisser



3D reconstruction of the King's golden padlock by Aristeas
 The padlock is a small precious-metal box, locked with a key,
 containing cutlery, toothpicks, and spices. It is placed to the king's
 right.



Superior d'après de l'original

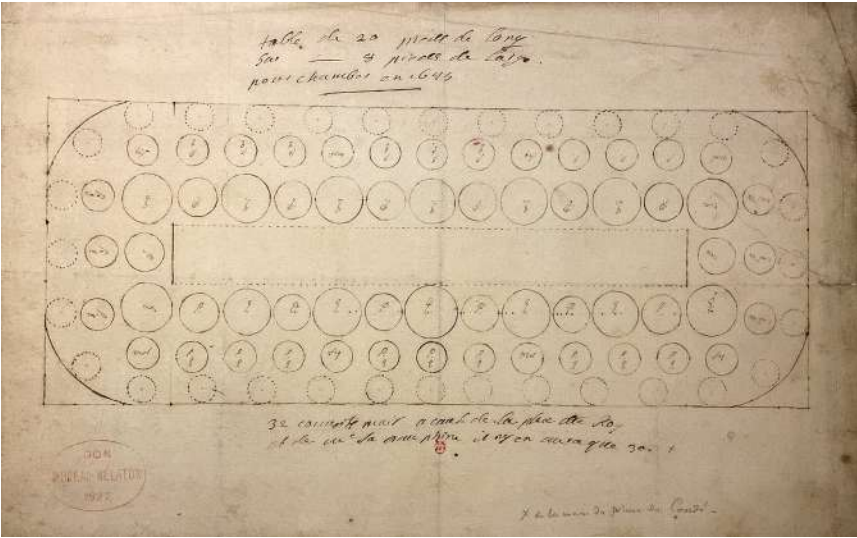
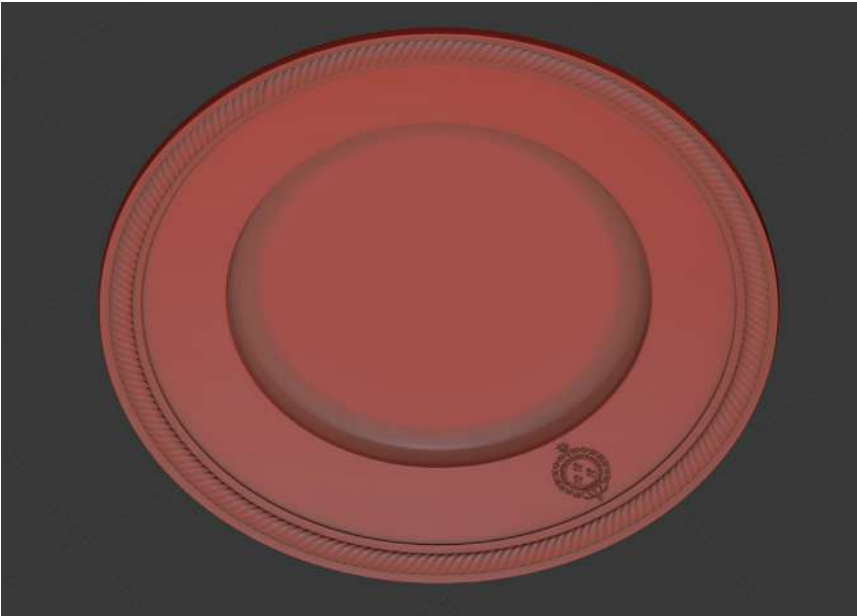


Table measuring 20 feet long by 8 feet wide for Chambord in 1685 (with autograph of the Prince of Condé)
 1685
 Manuscript
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, VA-41 (6)-FOL, Microfilm H 128627
 © Bibliothèque nationale de France

Transcription :
 Above the drawing:
 "Table 20 feet long by 8 feet wide for Chambord in 1685".
 Below the drawing:
 "32 covers, but due to the seating of the King and Madame the Dauphine, there will only be 30".
 On the drawing:
 "E" = Starter
 "PE" = Small starter
 "P" = Soup
 "Mel" = Melon
 "Fig" = Figs



3D reconstruction of the King's plate by Aristeas



Scenographic design © Agence NC

The 18th-century table

The third table on display takes visitors forward in time and into the private world of the stays of Marshal Maurice de Saxe at Chambord (1745–1750).

In the 18th century, new practices emerged, such as the consumption of “exotic” products, the specialization of certain spaces (for example, the appearance of the dining room), and the use of new materials and techniques to create tableware objects. The exhibition thus reconstructs the Marshal de Saxe’s “coffee room,” drawing in particular on his post-mortem inventories.

A table has been imagined where guests, after meals, could enjoy newly fashionable drinks (coffee, tea, chocolate), made possible thanks to the exceptional loan of Queen Marie Leszczynska’s tea and chocolate set, preserved at the National Museum of the Château de Versailles and Trianon.



Comte Maurice de Saxe
(1696-1750),
Maréchal de France
Attributed to Maurice-Quentin
de La Tour (1704-1788)
1748
Pastel on paper mounted on canvas and
stretched on a frame
Domaine national de Chambord,
CH/41/0915
© Domaine national de Chambord / Léonard de Serres





Marie Leszczyńska's tea and chocolate set: chocolate pot, two chocolate cups and saucers, five tea cups and saucers, milk jug, and large rinsing bowl

Meissen Porcelain Manufactory; Bonnaventura-Gottlieb Häuer
(attrib. to ; painter)
Circa 1737
Hard-paste porcelain, painted and gilded
Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon
© Château de Versailles, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Christophe Fouin

A prestigious loan from the National Museum of the Palaces of Versailles and Trianon and the National Museum of Ceramics (Sèvres): Queen Marie Leszczyńska's tea and chocolate set



Marie Leszczyńska's tea and chocolate set: milk jug (detail)

Meissen Porcelain Manufactory
Circa 1737
Hard-paste porcelain, painted and gilded; ebonized wood
Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, V.2017.1
© Château de Versailles, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn / Christophe Fouin



Marie Leszczyńska (1703-1768), Queen of France
After Jean-Baptiste Van Loo (1684-1745)

Circa 1725-1728
Oil on canvas
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0785
© Domaine national de Chambord / Ludovic Letot



Marabout coffee pot with ebony handle

18th century
Silver; ebony
Domaine national de Chambord, dépôt du château royal de Blois, INV 46.1.157
© Domaine national de Chambord / Ludovic Letot



Working sketch

The 20th-century table

The final table set on display offers visitors an immersion into a sumptuous republican banquet: the famous gala dinner held in honour of the Prince and Princess of Wales on 9 November 1988.

The meal highlights local expertise and regional products. The tableware and decorations come from the silverware collection of the Élysée Palace and from the holdings of the Mobilier National. Thanks to a valuable partnership with these two major institutions, the exhibition faithfully recreates the official table for sixteen guests that hosted the British royal couple. Savonnerie carpets and screens, porcelain plates from Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory, crystal glassware from Baccarat, silver centrepieces by Christofle, and silver cutlery from Puiforcat: the dinner table is truly spectacular.

Visitors can also admire the dress worn on this occasion by Princess Diana, thanks to an exceptional loan from the Museum of Fashion in Santiago, Chile, as well as the dress worn by Caroline of Monaco, on loan from Dior Heritage.



Charles and Diana, Prince and Princess of Wales, on the terraces of the Château de Chambord during their official visit to France, accompanied by Minister of Culture Jack Lang

Anonymous
9 November 1988
Silver gelatin print

Private collection
Image from the Grande collecte (2023-2024)



Prestigious loans: all the tableware, glassware, and silverware used in 1988

Presidency of the French Republic and Mobilier National



Napoleon III-style table centerpiece: tray, corner groups, central group, bouquet

Maison Christofle

1874-1875

Silver-plated metal

Mobilier national, GML-9771-001 à 008

© Mobilier national, photo Isabelle Bideau



Second Empire-style table centerpiece: ram and kid goat motif

Maison Christofle

Gilt bronze

Mobilier national, GML-9070-007

© Mobilier national, photo Isabelle Bideau



White lace coat-dress worn by Princess Diana at the Chambord gala dinner (9 November 1988)

Catherine Walker for The Chelsea Design Compagny (London) ;

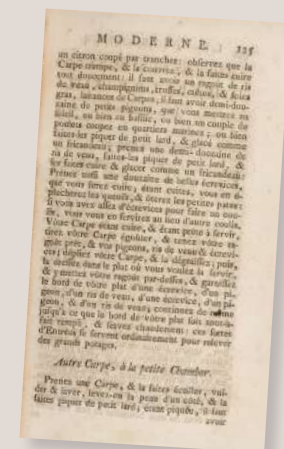
England

1988

Silk shantung covered with rayon lace; embellished with sequins and silk thread embroidery

Musée de la Mode, Santiago du Chili (Chili), Inv. 2011.311.Di

© Fondation Musée de la Mode, photographic archives Pedro Marinello



The modern cook, who teaches how to prepare all kinds of meals, volume 4 (pages 124–125)
 Vincent de La Chapelle (1690?-1745) ;
 published by Antoine de Groot (The Hague)
 1735
 Printed book
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 8-S-9808 (4)
 © Bibliothèque nationale de France

II - The museum space: Chambord at the center of the table

Centered on the collections of the Domaine national de Chambord, the second part of the exhibition is devoted to a broader exploration of the art of dining at Chambord, through a range of documentary and sensory materials.

Chambord on the menu

Throughout its history, Chambord has inspired several culinary creations highlighting the products and imagination of its local terroir. Among them is the famous Carpe à la Chambord, first published in 1735 by Vincent de La Chapelle in *Le Cuisinier moderne*. Frequently reinterpreted and then forgotten, this emblematic recipe is experiencing a revival today thanks to the contemporary version by two-Michelin-starred chef Christophe Hay (Fleur de Loire, Blois), featured in the exhibition.

In the spirit of a “fine grocery store,” the exhibition route also brings together a selection of products inspired by Chambord or made from the estate’s resources: herbal teas, rum babas, jams, honey, cured meats, vegetable soups, birch water, and even Chambord liqueur.



Salmon à la Chambord: engraved plate from “Le livre de cuisine: comprenant la cuisine de ménage et la grande cuisine” 1867
 Printed work
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, rare books department, V-14938
 © Bibliothèque nationale de France

At the table of Chambord

From the 2000s onwards, several archaeological campaigns carried out in the castle's cesspits have uncovered a significant set of remains: food waste, fragments of tableware, bottles, and everyday objects discarded by the estate's inhabitants. These discoveries provide valuable insight into dietary habits, table customs, and daily life at Chambord over the centuries.

A multimedia installation complements this approach by allowing visitors to explore former spaces linked to meal preparation: historic kitchens, ovens, sink stones, hot-holding "potagers," as well as the décor and graffiti preserved in the 17th-century cupbearer's room.

The Domaine national de Chambord preserves several remarkable sets linked to the art of dining, exceptionally presented within the exhibition:

- an 18th-century "à la brindille" porcelain service;
- the Bourbon-Parma princes' service bearing the emblem of Francis I (late 19th–early 20th century);
- a Limoges porcelain service created for two-Michelin-starred chef Bernard Robin and used for presidential hunting dinners at Chambord.



Sauce boat with "à la brindille" in blue monochrome
Chantilly Porcelain Manufactory
Second half of the 18th century
Soft-paste porcelain
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0781
© Domaine national de Chambord / Ludovic Letot



Upper part of a bottle bearing the coat of arms of Maréchal de Saxe
Green-tinted common glass
Circa 1745-1750
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0607
Domaine national de Chambord,



Coquemars and bowl
16th century
Wheel-thrown and moulded red ochre ware
Domaine national de Chambord, latrine sud, LS.01
© Domaine national de Chambord / Sophie Lloyd



On the menu at Chambord

What was served at the official table of Chambord?

The exhibition offers the opportunity to present several menus from notable meals held at Chambord during the 20th century: presidential hunting dinners from 1965 to 1980, a luncheon given in honour of Queen Elizabeth of England in 1979, a lunch served during the meeting of European Ministers of Agriculture in 2016, and others.

A selection of photographs also immerses visitors in more modest meals (a press banquet at the foot of the double staircase in 1900, a family lunch under the royal porch in 1948, etc.).

Finally, a video allows visitors to relive the filming of culinary television programmes at Chambord, notably the spectacular "Julie's Feast at Chambord", filmed in 2018 with Julie Andrieu.

[left]
Menu details: lunch on 20 February 1949
Imprimé
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0853/6
© Domaine national de Chambord

[right]
Menu of the luncheon offered in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by Madame Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
Wednesday, 24 October 1979
Printed 4 pp. in-8 ; green cord
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0997/010
© Domaine national de Chambord





III - The central role of innovation in the exhibition



A work of scientific reconstruction

For the first time in France, an exhibition brings to life objects that have disappeared or remained at the stage of projects or drawings! One hundred and eighty-three pieces of goldsmith's work (33 pieces for the Renaissance table and 160 pieces for the 17th-century table) have been specially created through a demanding research and development process.

The teams at ARISTEAS, a company specialising in 3D modelling of architecture and heritage, have recreated tableware, serving dishes, and ceremonial pieces based on Renaissance drawings and those from the reign of Louis XIV, as well as a few original objects preserved in museums. They rely on the expertise of a scientific committee, a detailed analysis of iconography, and an experimental method of 3D modelling and printing. The rendering of the objects gives an ultra-realistic appearance to the metallic tones produced, in accordance with the uses and techniques of each period.



Stages of modelling, 3D printing, and finishing by Aristéas
Photos © Aristéas



"Our scenographic work consists in orchestrating this heterogeneous ensemble to offer visitors an experience that is both immersive and evocative: feeling as though they are invited into the heart of the château's receptions, as close as possible to the customs and atmospheres specific to each period. Each space is designed as a 'period room,' where scientific rigour guides the staging while leaving room for a vivid evocation of Chambord's splendour, highlighting the documents, sources, and remains that made it possible to reconstruct these worlds with precision and coherence."

Hélène Lecarpentier and Mattéo Soyer, NC agency scenographers

Scenographic project for the reconstruction of the
1988 gala dinner table
© NC Agency, Paris

II - Interview with Virginie Berdal and Loïc Bienassis

Interview conducted by Irina MetzI

How did the idea of an exhibition on the feasts of Chambord come about?

[Virginie Berdal]

The exhibition originated from our collaboration with Loïc Bienassis on the book *At the Table of the Château de Chambord*, published in 2024 and now available in the château's shops. This book offered a diachronic reading of Chambord's culinary history and sparked the idea of adapting it into an exhibition.

[Loïc Bienassis]

The European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food and Eating [IEHCA], to which I belong, has been collaborating for several years with the Presses universitaires François-Rabelais on a series dedicated to the relationship between monumental heritage and food cultures. After volumes devoted to Valençay and then to the Château de Blois, it seemed natural to dedicate a book to Chambord. The Domaine national de Chambord immediately became involved in the project, going far beyond simple editorial support.

A dedicated photographic campaign was carried out to document the collections, spaces, and objects linked to the château's food history, which proved to be a particularly valuable contribution to a highly illustrated publication. Chambord already possessed a number of especially interesting resources for such a project: archaeological remains from excavations, 18th-century kitchens, as well as several ensembles related to dining practices.

The food theme was therefore already present in the château's visitor itinerary; the book made it possible to give it a broader historical depth. This initial collaboration served as a starting point for developing a scientific and cultural partnership around the



exhibition "The Feasts of Chambord". Moreover, Francis Chevrier, director of IEHCA, proposed the idea of an exhibition centred on gastronomy to Pierre Dubreuil as soon as he took up his position in 2023.

The IEHCA, in synergy with the University of Tours, works to develop research in Food Studies and to disseminate scientific culture in this field; a project such as this fits quite naturally within our programme of activities.

[Virginie Berdal]

It was also an opportunity to showcase the castle's collections related to these issues and to address a subject that had not yet been explored at Chambord. The question of food and dining practices had long been part of our reflections, without having yet resulted in an exhibition. The theme offered a dual interest: presenting a popular subject and creating an immersive scenography with both a scientific and educational approach.

What are the links between Chambord and gastronomy?

[Virginie Berdal]

The link between Chambord and gastronomy is not immediately obvious. For the first two centuries of its history, the château was not a permanent residence, but rather a place inhabited and animated by governors, caretakers, and other officials. Of course, it did host a few royal stays and distinguished guests. These royal visits, as well as state dinners and major receptions in the 20th century, gave rise to moments of ceremonial display in which the table played an essential role. The surviving traces are sometimes fragmentary, but it became clear that a place like

Chambord had indeed been the setting for true feasting occasions.

[Loïc Bienassis]

This assumption deserves to be questioned. One of the aims of the book and the exhibition is precisely to go beyond certain shortcuts and simplified representations.

Sologne*, for example, is spontaneously associated with game-based cuisine, yet it is in fact difficult to define a truly local culinary tradition. The same applies to Stanislas Leszczynski, who is somewhat the great gastronomic figure of Chambord, where he lived from 1725 to 1733, and to whom inventions such as the madeleine or the rum baba are often attributed. The two most immediate associations—hunting and Stanislas Leszczynski—were therefore not sufficient to build an exhibition; we wanted to go further and develop a more complete narrative.

[Virginie Berdal]

In the same way that Chambord cannot be reduced to a simple hunting lodge, it would be reductive to limit its culinary history to game-based cuisine. Moreover, one question remains: did people actually consume at the château's table the produce of the great princely hunts ?

[Loïc Bienassis]

This is an aspect we ultimately know rather little about. Hunting was first and foremost an aristocratic leisure activity and a form of display. The link between hunting practices and the actual content of meals remains difficult to establish.

* a natural region in Centre-Val de Loire, extending over three départements



Why did you choose the title "The Feasts of Chambord" ?

[Loïc Bienassis]

The term "feasts" established itself because the exhibition is based on the reconstruction of several major meals linked to the château's history. Each table is both a staging and a gateway into the culinary practices, social customs, and table arts of a given period. We identified several key figures and significant moments in the château's history that could structure the exhibition's narrative. The aim was not to propose a continuous history of gastronomy at Chambord—something the sources do not allow—but rather to highlight a few meaningful episodes capable of embodying different periods and dining practices.

The meeting between Francis I and Charles V in 1539, the stays of Louis XIV, the tastes of Marshal de Saxe in the 18th century, or the 1988 dinner in honour of Prince Charles and Lady Diana all represent such moments, such "feasts".

We try to tell the history of gastronomy through Chambord, and the history of Chambord through gastronomy.



How were the periods chosen: 16th, 17th, 18th, 20th centuries? The 19th century is not represented—how do you explain this choice ?

[Loïc Bienassis]

The choice of periods is based primarily on the existence of emblematic figures associated with Chambord and on the possibility of constructing a historical narrative from available sources.

Francis I and the visit of Charles V provided an essential starting point for evoking the Renaissance and 16th-century dining practices.

The stays of Louis XIV at Chambord, particularly during hunting periods, offer especially rich material thanks to an exceptional document: a 1685 drawing showing the arrangement of dishes on the king's table. This document allows us to address the structure of meals, the distinction between “fat” and “lean” days, and the ordering of dishes in the Early Modern period.

The 18th-century section is built around the Marshal de Saxe and the introduction of exotic beverages into aristocratic customs. Each time, Chambord serves as an entry point to explore the broader food culture of a given period.

[Virginie Berdal]

For the fourth table, we chose to focus on the 20th century in order to include the republican period in the exhibition itinerary. Chambord became state property in 1930, protected national collections during the Second World War, and later became a site for diplomatic and presidential representation. It therefore seemed essential not to limit our perspective to earlier periods, but to open it up to the contemporary world. From this point of view, the gala dinner in honour of the Prince and Princess of Wales, chaired by the Minister of Culture in 1988, appeared to be a fitting choice.

Ultimately, the château's very architecture guided our thinking. The four wings of the second floor, around the double-helix staircase, naturally suggested the creation of four major feasts.

The 19th century has not been ignored, but it is addressed differently. In the museographic section, we present a selection of rarely exhibited works from Chambord's collections, such as the table service of the Bourbon-Parma princes, with its Christofle silverware.

We also display menus from presidential hunting dinners and major official meals of the 20th century, along with archival materials and archaeological pieces from excavations of the château's cesspits. These spaces, occasionally used as domestic refuse pits, have yielded food remains, fragments of tableware, and everyday objects that tell the story of ordinary life at Chambord from the 16th century to the present day.

We have also added the theme “Chambord on the Menu”, which explores the château's influence on the French gastronomic imagination, notably through the famous recipe “La carpe à la Chambord”, which has been reinterpreted many times.

“The choice of periods is based primarily on the existence of emblematic figures associated with Chambord and on the possibility of constructing a historical narrative from available sources.”

Depending on the periods, what sources make it possible to reconstruct or recreate the tables and dishes presented?

[Virginie Berdal]

The value of the project lies precisely in the diversity of documentary situations encountered across the different periods.

For the 16th and 17th centuries, sources are fragmentary. The visit of Emperor Charles V to Chambord is known only through a few mentions describing the splendour displayed in the château: fine tapestries adorning the walls, flowers and herbs scattered on the floors, and scents burned in the “magnificent rooms”. However, no account describes the course of the visit or any possible meal shared between Francis I and the emperor.

This lack of documentation requires us to adopt a scientific interpretative approach. We work with a committee bringing together specialists in goldsmithing, furniture, textiles, iconography, and food history in order to reconstruct what may have existed, while remaining as close as possible to available knowledge.

For some periods, we are therefore in the realm of evocation and interpretation; for others, in near-documentary reconstruction. For the 18th century, the post-mortem inventory of Marshal de Saxe reveals his consumption of exotic beverages such as coffee, tea, and chocolate. The 1988 dinner, meanwhile, is an exceptional case. Beyond its symbolic significance, we had extremely rich documentation: audiovisual archives, photographs, press articles, and testimonies. An investigative effort allowed us to locate the tableware, furniture, and certain decorative elements used during the dinner. Thanks

to loans from the Mobilier National, the Presidency of the French Republic, and from former two-Michelin-star chef Bernard Robin, visitors can relive the atmosphere of the dinner as closely as possible to reality. We even identified and secured loans of two emblematic items: the dresses worn by Princess Diana and Princess Caroline of Monaco during the evening.

How to represent French cuisine—poorly documented—and table objects from the 16th and 17th centuries that have now disappeared ?

[Loïc Bienassis]

Indeed, the exhibition is partly built on two forms of absence: the lack of specific sources from Chambord on the one hand, and the gaps in our knowledge of food history on the other.

French cuisine of the 16th century remains relatively poorly understood. It should be noted that no menu from Louis XIV's meals has survived. Our work therefore consisted in relying on available sources and on the research of scholars, historians, and archaeologists in order to come as close as possible to the reality of these meals.



“The Feasts of Chambord thus aims to be an exhibition to see, smell, and taste”.

Virginie Berdal,
exhibition curator

[Virginie Berdal]

The disappearance of objects was one of the main challenges of the exhibition. No complete set of Renaissance tableware or silverware survives that would make it possible to reconstruct a 16th-century royal table. The aim was to obtain sufficiently realistic objects to allow visitors to project themselves into the visual world of Renaissance tables.

We therefore chose an experimental and innovative solution: bringing to life goldsmith designs created by Léonard Thiry and engraved by René Boyvin around 1540–1560. The depicted objects (ewer, basin, saltcellars, table nef, cups, candlesticks, etc.) were most likely never produced and remained at the design stage, but they provide a valuable testimony to the aesthetics of the period. Thanks to the remarkable 3D modelling carried out by the company Aristéas, they were 3D printed and then treated to achieve a finish resembling gold or silver. Extensive reconstruction work was carried out to imagine materials, finishes, and surface treatments. Specialists in goldsmithing played an essential role in this interpretative phase.

Was a scientific committee set up for the exhibition ?

[Virginie Berdal]

A scientific committee was specifically established to support the project. The Musée national de la Renaissance, a long-standing scientific partner of Chambord, naturally played a central role, with the valuable involvement of Thierry Crépin-Leblond and Julie Rohou. We also called on Michèle Bimbenet-Privat, a leading specialist in goldsmithing, as well as Pascal Briost, professor of modern history at the University of Tours, and Francis Chevrier, director of IEHCA.

[Loïc Bienassis]

To this initial circle were added several experts consulted on a more ad hoc basis depending on the project's needs: Isabelle Paresys (University of Lille) for Renaissance costume, Alain Salamagne (Centre for Advanced Renaissance Studies) for questions relating to kitchens, and Christelle Cazaux (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis) for music history. This diversity of skills and expertise was essential in building a credible and coherent reconstruction.

For the 17th and 20th centuries, the objects still exist and will be presented on the tables and in the exhibition. What are the major loans?

[Virginie Berdal]

Among the most important loans is Queen Marie Leszczyńska's tea and chocolate set, preserved at the National Museum of the Château de Versailles and Trianon. This exceptional service, originally composed of fifty-six pieces, was gradually dispersed; Versailles has reassembled part of it through an active acquisition policy. The Louvre and the Château of Blois are also lending several 18th-century goldsmith pieces.

The Mobilier National and the Presidency of the French Republic made it possible to reconstruct the setting of the 1988 dinner with tableware, silverware, and certain furniture elements used at the time. The exhibition also benefits from loans from institutions across France, the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Orléans, the Musée de Nancy, as well as private collectors.



Beyond objects and settings, how can the dishes, smells, and experience of meals be reconstructed ?

[Loïc Bienassis]

Reconstructing dishes is another major challenge. For Louis XIV's table, for example, we relied on contemporary cookbooks to establish a credible list of soups and starters that might have been served on a meatless day.

This research then informed a dialogue with the teams responsible for the visual reconstructions in order to determine the likely appearance of the dishes, their textures, and their colours.

[Virginie Berdal]

We wanted the exhibition to be sensory. For the 16th- and 17th-century tables, the reconstructed objects and dishes fully embrace their fictional dimension in order to enable complete immersion. The recreated goldsmith pieces produced through 3D printing interact with artificial dishes made by the company Cobalt FX. Olfactory and sound installations further enhance the experience, notably through work on table music and ambient scents.

The exhibition extends beyond the four tables. Work has been carried out with chef Christophe Hay on *carpe à la Chambord*, a contemporary interpretation of which is presented in the exhibition. Visitors can also find some of these culinary creations within the estate's dining areas. “The Feasts of Chambord” thus aims to be an exhibition to see, to smell, and to taste.



The European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food and Eating (IEHCA)

A scientific development agency affiliated with the University of Tours, the European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food and Eating (IEHCA) has been a leading authority in the field of food heritage for more than twenty years. In this capacity, it initiated and led the inscription of the gastronomic meal of the French on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2010), and later coordinated the scientific committee for the dossier on artisanal know-how and the culture of baguette bread (UNESCO, 2022).

Supported by the Centre-Val de Loire Regional Council and the City of Tours, the institute works to disseminate scientific culture through a rich cultural programme combining lectures, workshops, and public events at the Villa Rabelais, the House of Gastronomic Cultures in Tours.

It also supports research in Food Studies by animating a multidisciplinary network of researchers, organising conferences and symposia, pursuing an ambitious editorial policy, and building a reference documentation centre in Europe.

Around the exhibition

A programme of mediation and events for all audiences extends the visitor experience, celebrates gastronomy and related heritage, and brings the spirit of conviviality to life.

Tours and workshops

- “Gourmet” activity booklet for young visitors.
- Guided tours of the exhibition for adult groups and school groups, by reservation.
- Public guided tour: “At the Table of Chambord: Remains and Kitchen Secrets”. Walking through spaces sometimes closed to the public, the tour explores the evolution of culinary practices and dining manners through often unsuspected remains.
- Family and school workshops: “At the King’s Table” to understand the ceremonial of a meal at the court of Francis I (role-playing with costumes and props). During the All Saints’ holiday period.
- A day of activities led by the association “Portez-moi pour un rêve” offering people with reduced mobility the opportunity to experience the exhibition.

Tours and workshops are only in French.

Participatory banquet

Privileged evening visit of the exhibition, followed by a participatory buffet banquet for residents of the territory of the Communauté de communes du Grand Chambord on 26 September 2026.

- Free of charge, by registration (subject to availability).

Scientific and educational programme

Lecture series

- **4 october 2026 - Islands at the table: a story of coffee, tea and chocolate:**
 - Lecture on the introduction of exotic beverages to the French court in the 17th–18th centuries by Erick Noël, professor at the University of the Antilles (Martinique) and author of *Le goût des Îles sur les tables des Lumières* (2020, La Geste, La Crèche, 192 pp.)
 - Guided tasting session
- **6 november 2026 - An evening with the curators:**
 - Free visit of the exhibition
 - Lecture on the theme “Reconstructing, recreating, reinventing: the challenges of staging Chambord’s great feasts”.
- **27 november 2026 - 1988 an exceptional dinner:**
 - Testimony evening with the participants involved in the gala dinner held in honour of the Prince and Princess of Wales on 9 November 1988
- **11 janvier 2027 - Study day**
 - Organised in partnership with the IEHCA and the CESR
 - Theme “Eating in the Renaissance”.

Lecture series are only in French.

Arts and cultural education project

- PEAC with two CM2 classes from the Loir-et-Cher department: **An almost perfect banquet:**
- In partnership with artist Catherine Röhlich, paper sculptor (Atelier Anecdotes), the early music ensemble Le Banquet du Roy, the IEHCA, and the Communauté de communes du Grand Chambord (as part of the PACT programme).
 - After a visit to the exhibition accompanied by the curators, pupils will take part in workshops and classroom sessions. They will create artificial paper dishes and present their interpretation of a Renaissance table within the exhibition, during the “issue de table” (dessert course).



The estate’s restaurants

To extend the visitor experience, the estate’s restaurants will offer recipes inspired by the exhibition, including 18th-century-style hot chocolate made with water (rather than milk), cane sugar, and spices.

Le Relais de Chambord

As part of the *Feasts of Chambord* exhibition, the restaurant of the Relais de Chambord, “Le Grand Saint-Michel”, is offering a menu designed with Joseph Viola, Meilleur Ouvrier de France, and chef Marion Carraud. This culinary experience extends the exhibition by revisiting, across the centuries, dishes served at the great meals of the Château of Chambord.

Le Relais de Chambord is the only hotel located within the vast Chambord estate. Fully renovated in 2018 by French architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, the hotel is an emblematic site of the estate. Formerly a hunting lodge, it has hosted figures such as Pompidou and Giscard d’Estaing. Today, the Relais de Chambord continues the spirit of grand dining that once welcomed prominent visitors to Chambord.



Christophe Hay
© Louise Jean-Baptiste

Christophe Hay and Fleur de Loire

Chambord has inspired several recipes over time that highlight the products of its local terroir. In the exhibition, two-Michelin-starred chef Christophe Hay (Fleur de Loire, Blois) revisits Carpe à la Chambord, an emblematic dish of his cuisine.

Inspired by historical representations and recipes, his version features carp prepared as a rolled stuffing, accompanied by a brunoise of mushrooms and crayfish, a crisp wafer made from mushroom flour and truffle, and a sauce made with Cheverny red wine with red fruit notes.

Awarded two Michelin stars, the chef champions refined regional cuisine focused on the products of the Loire Valley and freshwater fish. Together with the team at Fleur de Loire, he works every day to showcase the flavours and craftsmanship of the region.

Hotel le Grand Saint Michel (now Le Relais de Chambord), vintage postcard, 1905

© Domaine national de Chambord

Partners and lenders

The Domaine national de Chambord would like to thank all the lenders and partners of the exhibition *The Feasts of Chambord*.

Lenders

- Presidency of the French Republic - Élysée Palace
- Musée du Louvre, Paris
- National Museum of the Palaces of Versailles and Trianon
- National Manufactories – Sèvres & Mobilier National
- Bibliothèque nationale de France
- Dior Héritage, Paris
- Fundación Museo de la Moda, Santiago (Chile)
- Musée Carnavalet – History of Paris
- Musée national de la Renaissance, Écouen
- Musée lorrain, Nancy
- Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Orléans
- Beaux-Arts de Paris
- Departemental Archives of Loir-et-Cher
- Private collections, including that of former two-Michelin-starred chef Bernard Robin.

Partners

■ Magique studio

Fragrances will be created by Magique Studio using archival materials and the expertise of a scientific committee to recreate the foods and scents of the period, including:

- Oiselet de Chypre (Cypriot bird dish)
- Roasted poultry served at the supper of Francis I and Charles V
- A dinner from the court of Louis XIV
- Chocolate and coffee from the 18th century

Magique is a creative and innovation studio dedicated to exploring the sense of smell in all its forms. At the intersection of Art, Design, Technology, and Perfumery, the studio creates multisensory experiences and olfactory installations that invite audiences to perceive artworks, places, and stories in new ways.

Founded in 2017 by its artistic director, Mazen Nasri, Magique has developed a poetic and experimental approach in which fragrance becomes a medium in its own right.

■ Atelier Mériguet-Carrère

Founded in 1960, Atelier Mériguet-Carrère is a distinguished company specializing in the creation and restoration of painted decorations, gilding, and decorative finishes. Drawing on craftsmanship traditions inherited from the 17th century, the atelier works on historic monuments as well as private residences, luxury hotels, and prestigious institutions. Awarded the Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant (Living Heritage Company) label, it combines traditional artisanal expertise with contemporary creativity in the service of some of France's and the world's most remarkable heritage sites.

A skills-based patron of the Domaine national de Chambord since 2025, Atelier Mériguet-Carrère is supporting the institution in the creation and reproduction of decorative elements for the exhibition *The Feasts of Chambord*. Its contributions include the gilding of the exhibition's entrance doors, the design of decorative settings for display cases showcasing banquet tables and costumes, and the creation of wainscoting panels. The atelier will also reproduce the Marshal of Saxe's stove, whose original version, located on the first floor of the château, cannot be moved.

The Domaine national de Chambord

About Domaine national de Chambord

For more than 500 years, Chambord has inspired admiration and fascination around the world. A masterpiece of the reign of Francis I, the Château de Chambord stands as a defining architectural statement of the French Renaissance.

Listed among France's first historic monuments in 1840 and designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1981, Chambord is the second most visited château in France, welcoming more than one million visitors each year. The estate is also distinguished by Europe's largest enclosed forest park, which covers 5,440 hectares (13,440 acres).

Owned by the French State since 1930, the Domaine national de Chambord is a public industrial and commercial institution (EPIC) operating under the supervision of the French ministries responsible for Culture, Agriculture, and the Environment, and under the high patronage of the President of the French Republic. By decree of the Conseil d'État dated 1 June 2018, the institution incorporated the Grand Parc de Rambouillet.

The Board of Directors is chaired by Philippe Donnet, and since January 2023 the public institution has been led by Pierre Dubreuil.

Opening hours

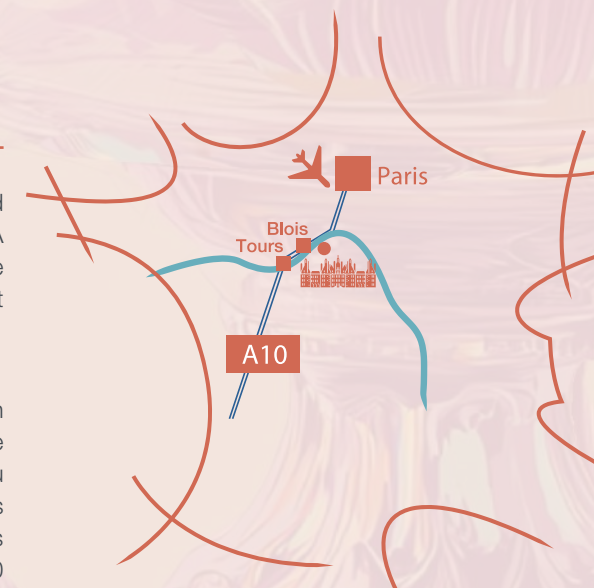
For detailed opening hours on www.chambord.org

From April to October and during the Christmas holidays: **9.00 am – 6.00 pm**

From November to March: **9.00 am – 5.00 pm**

Last admission is 30 minutes before the château closes. The French formal gardens close 30 minutes before the château.

*The château closes at 4:00 p.m. (16:00) on December 24 and December 31.



Practical information

Admission fees

Detailed admission fees are available on chambord.org. Access to the château, the exhibition, and the French formal gardens is free of charge for European Union citizens under the age of 26.

Getting there from Paris (under two hours)

By car: Take the A10 motorway towards Bordeaux and exit at Mer (Exit 16) or Blois (Exit 17).

By train: Depart from Paris Austerlitz Station and travel to Blois–Chambord or Mer station.

Château opening hours

The château is open every day except:

January and 25 December;

- Mondays during the low season (exact dates available on the Chambord website);

- Staff Day (in March; exact date available on the Chambord website).

When the château is closed to the public, the estate remains freely accessible.



CAPTIONS

Pages 4-5

Salle d'Eros et Psyché : Le Banquet de mariage d'Eros et Psyché (détail)
Jules Romain
Vers 1532-1535
Mantoue, Palais du Tè
© SCALA, Florence, Dist. GrandPalaisRmn/
image Scala

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Portrait de François I^{er} (1494-1547)
Pierre Dupuis fils (1833-1915) ;
d'après Titien (v.1488-1576)
1852
Huile sur toile
Domaine national de Chambord, CH/41/0006
© Domaine national de Chambord, Ludovic
Letot

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Banquet de mariage d'Alexandre Farnèse et Marie du Portugal Frans Floris
1565
Manuscrit
Collection de la bibliothèque de l'université de Varsovie, cabinet des estampes, collection royale (inw Zb.d.10258)

Pages 10 et 11 (centered)

Un plat et deux vases à sujets mythologiques (détail)
Léonard Thiry (vers 1500-vers 1550)
XVI^e siècle
Plume, encre brune et lavis brun
ENSBA, Mas.2493
© Beaux-Arts de Paris

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Almanach pour l'année 1688 / Louis le Grand, l'amour et les délices de son peuple. Réception et dîner du roi à l'Hôtel de Ville de Paris, pour sa guérison, 30 janvier 1687 (détail)
Anonyme, Nicolas I^{er} Langlois éditeur 1688
Gravure
Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris (Paris), G. 20301
CCO Paris Musées /Musée Carnavalet – Histoire de Paris

Pages 14 – 15 (centered)

Dessins pour objets en argent cuillères-à-olives et manches de couteaux
Nicolas Ambroise Cousinet
NMH THC 834
CCO Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

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Le duc de Penthièvre et sa famille (détail)
Jean-Baptiste Charpentier le vieux (1728-1806)
1768
Huile sur toile
Domaine national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, MV 7716
© GrandPalaisRmn (Château de Versailles) / Gérard Blot

Page 18 – 19 (centered)

Nécessaire à thé et à chocolat de Marie Leszczyńska : pot à lait (détail)
Manufacture de porcelaine de Meissen; Bonnaventura-Gottlieb Häuer (attrib. à; peintre)
Vers 1737
Porcelaine dure peinte et dorée
Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, V. 2018.24
© Château de Versailles, Dist.
GrandPalaisRmn / Christophe Fouin

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Photo de la table dressée pour le dîner de 1988
Collection de l'ancien chef doublement étoilé Bernard Robin.

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Assiette plate à bordure bleu foncé Manufacture de Sèvres, Porcelaine
En dépôt à la Présidence de la République - Palais de l'Élysée
Verre à eau service Trianon RF, Cristal de Baccarat
Palais de l'Élysée
Verre à vin rouge et verres à vin blanc, service Trianon RF, Cristal de Baccarat
Palais de l'Élysée
© Domaine national de Chamobrd / Photo Sophie Lloyd

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Rafraîchissoir à bouteilles orné de frises florales et géométriques, muni d'une tête moulée de préhension
XVIII^e siècle
Faïence
Domaine national de Chambord, latrine ouest, LO.13
© Domaine national de Chambord / Ludovic Letot

Bouteille de vin aux Armes de Napoléon I^{er}

Début du XIX^e siècle
Verre commun teinté vert (verre soufflé à la canne)
Domaine national de Chambord, latrine ouest, LO.75
© Domaine national de Chambord / Ludovic Letot

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© Domaine national de Chambord / Ludovic Letot

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EXHIBITION

Exhibition Design

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Exhibition Graphic Design

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