

OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

Villandry Castle

Villandry · From 199€

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



History & Experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Fortress to Renaissance Jewel

GOOGLE 4.7 ★★★★★ 20 641 reviews

TIQETS 4.78 ★★★★★ 12 reviews

The story of Villandry begins not with a garden, but with a fortress. In the Middle Ages, this site was known as **Colombiers**, a medieval stronghold that dominated the surrounding countryside. It was here, in 1189, that Richard the Lionheart and Philip II signed a historic peace treaty, embedding the location deep within the political fabric of France. For centuries, the castle served as a military bastion, its walls thick and imposing, reflecting the turbulent history of the Plantagenet and Capetian struggles for power in Touraine.

In 1532, Jean Breton, Secretary of Finances for Francis I, acquired the property and envisioned something entirely different. He sought to transform this austere fortress into a symbol of the **French Renaissance**. Under his direction, the castle was rebuilt with elegant stone facades, tall chimneys, and large windows that invited light into the rooms. This architectural shift marked the end of the First French Renaissance, creating a residence designed for pleasure rather than defense, perfectly aligned with the humanist ideals of the era.

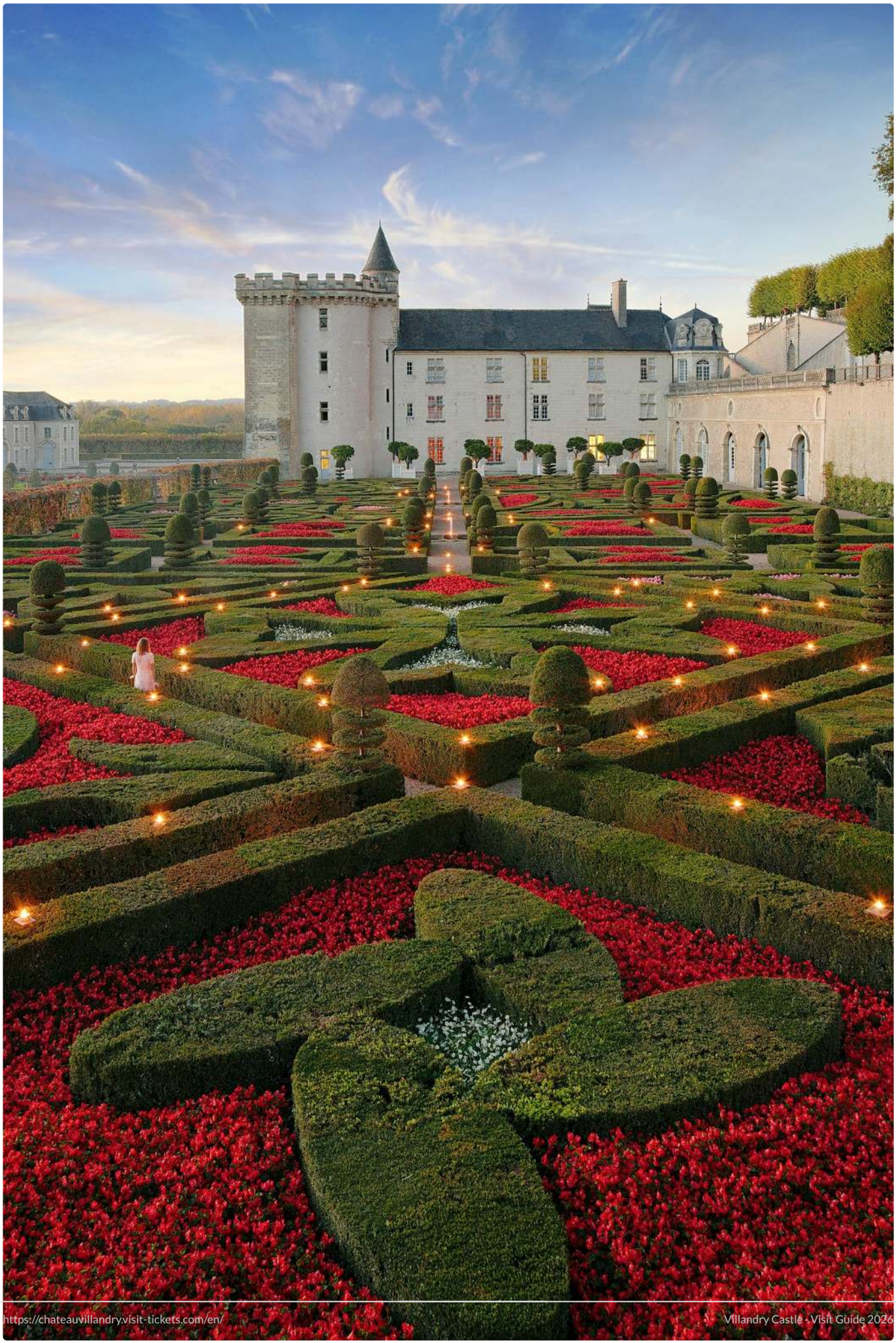
However, the gardens we admire today are not original to the 16th century. By the early 20th century, the landscape had fallen into disrepair, replaced by English-style parks. It was Dr. **Joachim Carvallo**, who purchased the estate in 1906, who embarked on a monumental mission to restore it. He spent years studying ancient engravings by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, meticulously reconstructing the geometric parterres and water features that defined Renaissance horticulture. His work was an act of archaeological gardening, bringing back to life a vision lost for centuries.

Today, the castle stands as a testament to this dual heritage. The structure itself is classified as a Historic Monument since **1934**, recognizing its immense cultural value. The six hectares of gardens are divided into distinct themes: embroidery, geometry, love, and vegetables. Each section tells a part of the story, from the intricate knotwork of hedges to the practical beauty of the vegetable plots, offering a living museum of botanical history and artistic design.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping through the gates of Villandry, you are immediately struck by the precision of the landscape. The air carries the scent of lavender and rosemary, while the sunlight dances off the geometric patterns of the **Garden of Love**. There is a profound sense of order here, a visual harmony that calms the mind. The vibrant colors of the flowers contrast sharply with the grey stone of the castle, creating a palette that feels both timeless and vividly alive.

Inside the castle, the atmosphere shifts to one of quiet elegance. Sunlight streams through the large Renaissance windows, illuminating antique furniture and tapestries that whisper tales of aristocratic life. The silence is palpable, broken only by the distant sound of fountains. You feel like a guest in a private home where history has been preserved with care, allowing you to step back in time without the chaos of modern crowds.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Practical Information

ADDRESS

Villandry · Indre-et-Loire (37). Accessible via A10 exit Tours-Ouest then D910. Free on-site parking.

OPENING HOURS

Open every day from April to October. Closed on certain days during the low season (November-March). Check exact hours before your visit.

PRICES

Children under 6 free. Reduced rates for groups and schools. Book online to guarantee your spots.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 2h30 to 3 hours to leisurely explore the six gardens and tour the interior of the castle without rushing. Combine architecture and horticulture.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed in the gardens and the castle, but flash photography is prohibited inside to preserve artworks and furniture. Respect the rules.

AUDIENCE

Ideal site for botany and history enthusiasts. Suitable for families for an educational stroll, but note: this is not a playground.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & Transportation

Metro

Tours - Val de Loire Airport (49 min) · Savonnières (14 min)

Bus

: Villandry Centre — 4 min à pied

Aéroport de Tours - Val de Loire (80 min) · Savonnières (21 min)

Car

Aéroport de Tours - Val de Loire (63 min) · Savonnières (14 min)

Bike

Aéroport de Tours - Val de Loire (86 min) · Savonnières (17 min)

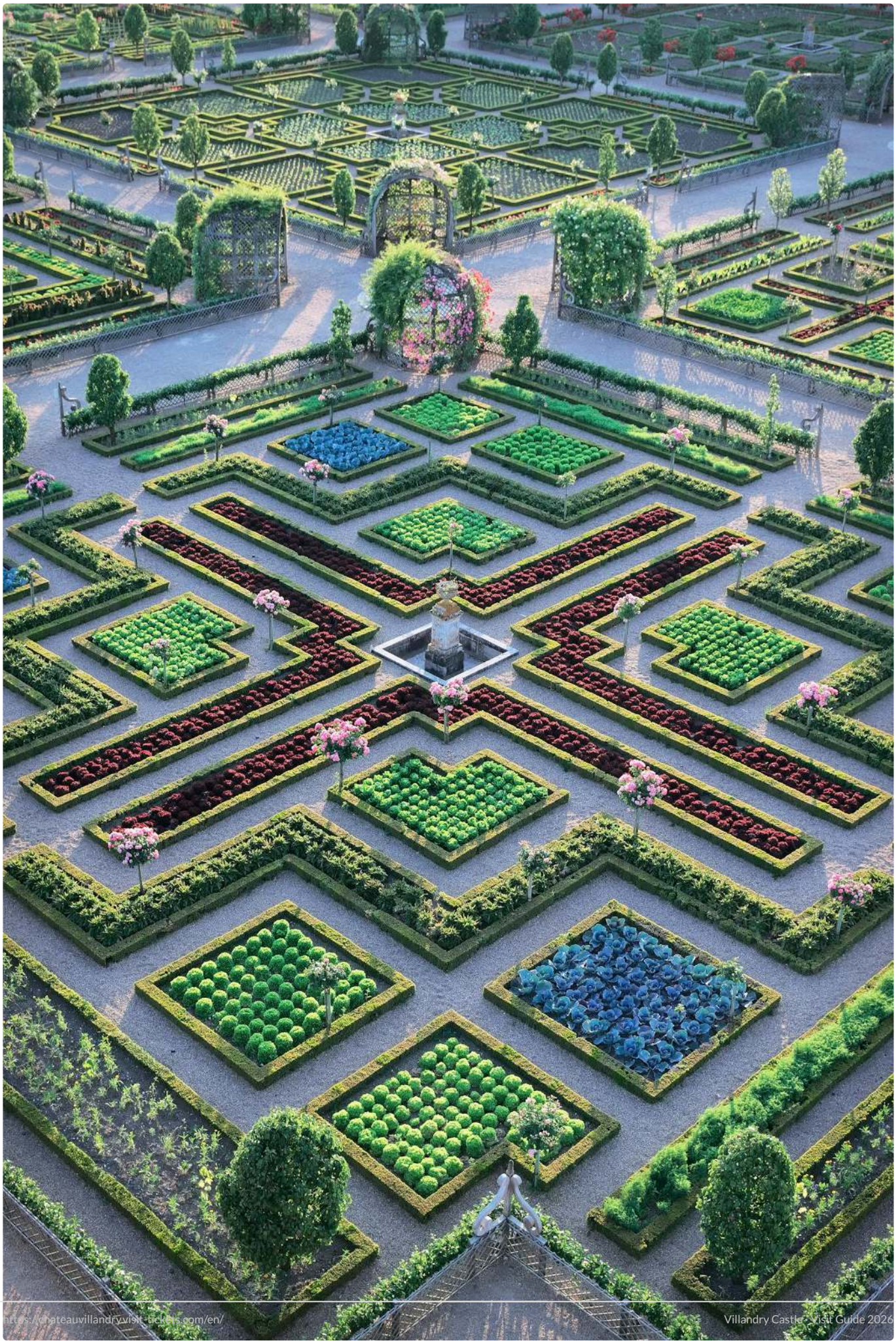
LOCALISATION

Où se trouve Villandry Castle ?



📍 Villandry

🌐 47°20.412′ N, 0°30.890′ E



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Six Gardens

Level 1: The Castle Interior

Begin your journey inside the Renaissance palace. Admire the grand staircase, the ornate fireplaces, and the period furniture that reflects the lifestyle of the 16th-century nobility. The rooms are filled with natural light, highlighting the architectural details that Jean Breton introduced. Take time to observe the transition from medieval fortification to elegant residence.

Level 2: The Upper Terraces

Step out onto the upper terraces overlooking the main gardens. Here, you will find the Garden of Love and the Embroidery Garden. These spaces feature intricate knotwork designs made from boxwood and cypress, planted with colorful flowers that change with the seasons. The perspective from this height allows you to appreciate the mathematical precision of the layout.

Level 3: The Lower Gardens & Vegetable Plots

Descend to the lower levels to explore the Geometry Garden and the famous Vegetable Garden. The latter is a masterpiece of symmetry, featuring rows of carrots, beans, and herbs arranged in perfect geometric patterns. This area highlights the practical side of Renaissance gardening, where beauty and utility coexist. Don't miss the fountains and the hidden hydraulic engineering beneath the paths.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Accessibility for people with reduced mobility**

Partial access to gardens via flat paths; verification recommended for the interior of the castle.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

An educational venue suitable for families, but not designed as an active playground.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Masterpieces of Garden Design

01 Upper Terrace

The Garden of Love

This is the most iconic section of the estate, featuring a complex maze of boxwood hedges forming heart shapes and floral motifs. The design is inspired by **Renaissance symbolism**, representing the complexities of romantic passion. Visitors often spend considerable time here photographing the intricate patterns from above.

> 💡 The central fountain features a statue of Cupid, but the true star is the changing flower beds that follow the calendar, ensuring **vibrant colors** throughout the season.

02 Lower Level

The Vegetable Garden

Unlike typical ornamental gardens, this space is dedicated to edible plants arranged in strict geometric order. It showcases over 100 varieties of vegetables, including carrots, leeks, and spinach, planted in precise squares and circles. This garden demonstrates the **practical elegance** of the Renaissance approach to agriculture.

> 💡 Dr. Joachim Carvallo insisted on keeping this garden authentic, using traditional methods without modern pesticides, making it a **living laboratory** of historical horticulture.

03 Upper Terrace

The Embroidery Garden

Named for its resemblance to needlework, this garden features delicate patterns created by low-growing plants. The designs mimic lace and silk threads, showcasing the skill of the gardeners in maintaining such fine details. It is a testament to the **artistry of pruning** required to keep these shapes intact.

> 💡 The patterns are so detailed that they can only be fully appreciated from the castle windows, emphasizing the **visual connection** between the interior and exterior spaces.

04 Middle Terrace

The Geometry Garden

This garden focuses on abstract shapes and lines, using yew trees and boxwood to create a sense of infinite space. The use of perspective tricks makes the garden appear larger than it is, a common technique in Renaissance design. It offers a more **structured aesthetic** compared to the floral abundance of other sections.

> 💡 The central axis aligns perfectly with the castle's main entrance, reinforcing the **architectural harmony** of the entire estate.

05 Central Axis

The Fountain of Hercules

Located at the heart of the gardens, this fountain serves as a focal point for the symmetrical layout. The water jets are powered by a hidden network of pipes, a feat of **hydraulic engineering** restored by Carvallo. It provides a soothing auditory backdrop to the visual experience.

> 💡 The original fountain dates back to the 16th century, but the current mechanism is a modern interpretation that respects the **historical fidelity** of the design.

06 Side Terrace

The Rose Garden

Dedicated to roses, this section features hundreds of varieties, each labeled with its name and origin. The scents vary from sweet to spicy, creating a sensory journey through the history of rose cultivation. It is particularly beautiful in late spring when the blooms are at their peak.

> 💡 Some of these roses are heirloom varieties that date back to the **19th century**, preserved thanks to the careful selection by the gardeners.

07 Rear Area

The Kitchen Garden

Separate from the main geometric plots, this area grows herbs and vegetables used in the castle's kitchen. It includes lavender, thyme, and mint, which visitors can smell as they pass by. This garden highlights the **functional aspect** of the estate's self-sufficiency.

> 💡 The herbs are harvested daily for use in the **local restaurants** nearby, connecting the garden directly to the culinary culture of Touraine.

08 Interior

The Castle's Grand Staircase

Inside the castle, the grand staircase is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. Its open design allows light to flood the space, contrasting with the dark wood and stone. The balustrade features intricate carvings that reflect the **artistic sophistication** of the period.

> 💡 This staircase was added during the reconstruction by Jean Breton, replacing the older, darker medieval stairs with a **symbol of openness** and modernity.

TIPS

Essential Tips for Your Visit

TIMING

Arrive exactly at opening time, especially in summer, to capture photos of the gardens without crowds. Morning light enhances the colors of the flowers and the geometric shapes.

BILLET

Book tickets online in advance to guarantee entry, particularly during peak season (April-October) and weekends. This avoids long queues at the ticket office.

PARCOURS

Start with the castle interior to understand the historical context, then move to the gardens. Allow 2h30 to 3 hours to leisurely explore all six gardens without rushing.

PHOTO

Photography is allowed in the gardens and castle, but flash is strictly prohibited inside. Use natural light in the furnished rooms to capture the warm atmosphere.

PAUSE

Take a break at Le Clos des Tilleuls in Villandry for a refined lunch using local Touraine products. Alternatively, enjoy a coffee at the official shop near the exit.

ENFANTS

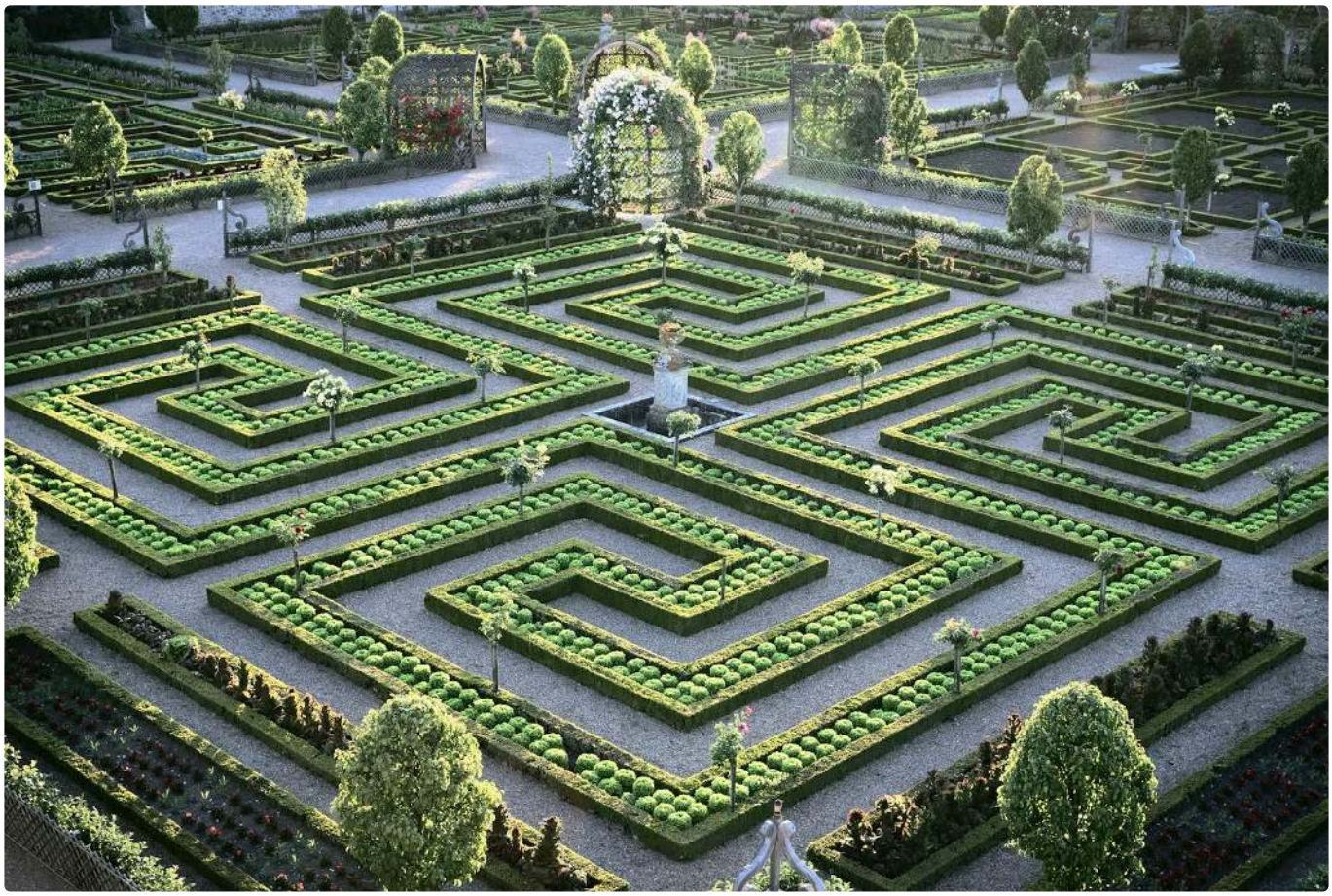
While suitable for families, this is not a playground. Engage children by asking them to identify different plant shapes or count the geometric patterns in the Vegetable Garden.

AUDIOGUIDE

Rent the audioguide available in French, English, and Spanish. It provides essential context on the reconstruction by Joachim Carvallo and the history of the Renaissance gardens.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable shoes as the six hectares feature paved paths and gentle slopes. Secure bike parking and free lockers are available near the entrance for cyclists.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book tickets for Villandry Castle?

Yes, online booking is strongly recommended, especially during peak season (April-October) and weekends. This avoids queues at the ticket office and guarantees entry even if the estate reaches capacity. You can cancel fr

Can I buy tickets on site?

It is possible to buy tickets at the ticket office if capacity allows, but this often involves a significant wait. During peak periods, the site may be saturated and access denied without a pre-booked ticket. Therefore,

Are there reduced rates?

Preferential rates are available for children, young people aged 18 to 25, seniors, and holders of cultural cards. Groups also benefit from specific discounts upon presentation of a certificate. Consult the official pric

Does the ticket include only the gardens?

No, the standard ticket grants access to both the castle and the gardens. These two spaces form an inseparable historical and aesthetic whole since the reconstruction by Joachim Carvallo. It is generally not possible to

What are the opening hours for the gardens?

The hours vary according to the seasons: later opening in winter and earlier closing at the end of the day. From April to October, the gardens are open every day. In the low season, closures may occur on certain days. Al

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The Lost Garden Reborn

The current gardens are a faithful reconstruction carried out from **1906** by Dr. Joachim Carvallo. He spent years studying old engravings by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau to faithfully recreate the 16th-century plans, turning a neglected park into a world-renowned landmark.

Last of the Loire Palaces

Château de Villandry is considered the last great castle built on the Loire in the 16th century. This construction marks the end of the **First French Renaissance**, bringing a final flourish to the architectural innovations of the era before the style evolved.

Hidden Hydraulic Engineering

Beneath the geometric parterres lies a complex network of pipes and pumps that feed the fountains. During his restoration, Carvallo had to reinvent this invisible system, demonstrating the **technical ingenuity** required to maintain such elaborate water features.

Medieval Origins

Before becoming a Renaissance jewel, the site was a medieval fortress named 'Colombiers'. The current castle incorporates parts of this earlier structure, including the donjon, which now sits symbolically within the new **architectural ensemble**.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Beyond the castle walls, the village of Villandry offers charming opportunities to extend your day. Just steps away, the **Saint-Martin Church** provides a stunning vantage point; climb its bell tower for an unobstructed view of the castle and its gardens. For lunch, consider visiting **Le Clos des Tilleuls**, a local gourmet restaurant that serves dishes prepared with fresh products from Touraine, perfect for savoring after a long walk. If you have time before or after your visit, the nearby city of Tours is easily accessible. Explore the **Tours Museum of Fine Arts** for a rich collection ranging from Antiquity to the 20th century, or stroll through the historic Covered Market to taste regional specialties. The Parc de la Gloriette in Tours also offers a shaded promenade along the Loire, ideal for a relaxing digestive pause.



Villandry is more than a destination; it is a dialogue between nature and architecture. Whether you visit in the bloom of spring or the stark beauty of winter, the gardens offer a unique perspective on time and memory. Let the geometric lines guide your thoughts and the fragrances soothe your senses. This is a place where **history breathes**, inviting you to pause, reflect, and appreciate the enduring art of the French landscape.