



- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1 Half moon | 9 Upper terrace – Charmille |
| 2 Reception - Boutique | 10 Terrace of Léda |
| 3 Toilets | 11 Terrace of anduzian vases |
| 4 Terrace of the florentines fountains | 12 Kitchen garden |
| 5 Troglodyte chapel | 13 henhouse |
| 6 Site of the old château | 14 Orchard |
| 7 Petit Valmer (Private) | 15 Moat |
| 8 Entrance to the oarc and picnic area | |

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 *Sophora 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 (4)** with its borders of annual plants. In 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 (5)**. 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 (6) 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 (7)** was built in 1647 and is a fine example of the architecture of the period.



Château de Valmer - 37210 Chançay - France - Tel. : +33 2 47 52 93 12 - jardins@chateauvalmer.com - www.chateauvalmer.com

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 Leda (10) was restored in 1999 to its seventeenth century design with walls covered in chasselas grape vines and perfumed, drought tolerant plants – iris, lavenders, gauras. 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 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 kitchen garden (12) follows a classical 15th century design: one hectare is divided in four quarters bordered by box hedges each of which is divided into four further sections. In the centre is a circular pond. High walls surround the whole garden with two small corner towers serving as storage for tools and in earlier times as lodgings for the gardener and a donkey. Two ancient greenhouses are used for seed propagation. A beautiful 17th century gate opens onto the valley and the canal. Fruit trees, under planted by narcissi, are ranged along the walls both 'contre-espalier' (against the wall) and espalier; nectarines, apricots, figs, nashis (sometimes called Asian pears), apples and pears.

The squares of fruit bushes offer gooseberries, blackcurrant, casseilles (a cross between a blackcurrant and a gooseberry), groseilles à maquereau (a type of gooseberry which traditionally accompanied mackerel) and raspberries. Against the wall are 'stalls' of yew framing the brilliant blue flowers of ceanothus, daffodils and pink herbaceous geraniums.

New for 2014 is a collection of grape vines - grape varieties grown for producing wine in the Val du Loire and those grown as dessert grapes. The bed containing white wine varieties, is bordered by yellow roses 'The Poet's Wife' (David Austin). Alix de Saint Venant is 'la marraine' of this new rose. The red wine varieties are surrounded by red roses 'Papa Meiland'. The dessert grapes, both white and red, grow on pergolas and are interplanted with climbing roses and clematis.

It is a checkerboard of colours and flavours, unusual edible plants, edible flowers and nectar rich plants: at Valmer we test, we try, we taste and we eat what we grow.

The horticultural methods are aimed at preserving and improving the quality of the soil, the fauna and the flora (homemade compost, mulching, green manure). Herbaceous plants in the borders give shelter and food to useful insects and predators of insect pests: beetles, hedgehogs, pollinators etc.

Beyond the 'Donkey Tower' you enter **the orchard (14)** with its collection of fig trees ranged along the north wall: 'Madeleine des deux saisons', 'Brunswick', 'Violette Dauphine', 'Bourjassotte panachée'. The paths are bordered by plum and peach trees.

The moat (15), 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 Leda, 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 *Schizophragma hydrangeoides* with elliptical pale pink flowers, *Pileostegia viburnoides* and *Decumaria 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 March, the scented *Osmanthus x burkwoodii* flowers, followed by the green, white and pink leaves of the *Actinidia kolomikta*. 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 hectares, 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. Over several years an arboretum has been established with the introduction of rare trees and shrubs. Two great axes on the side of the hill lead to circles decorated by columns 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.

Valmer is also a "Garden amongst the Vines", Le Clos du Parc a 6 hectare vineyard certified since the 17th century – an opportunity to stroll through the rows of Chenin vines.

On returning to the shop, you can sample the Vouvray wine of the Château de Valmer, discover regional gastronomic products, be revived with some "nibbles" and purchase unusual seeds as a reward for and souvenir of your long promenade across the terraces.

Thank you for your visit, which helps to protect and maintain this privately owned historic monument.

