

VISIT to the CHÂTEAU de LÉHÉLEC



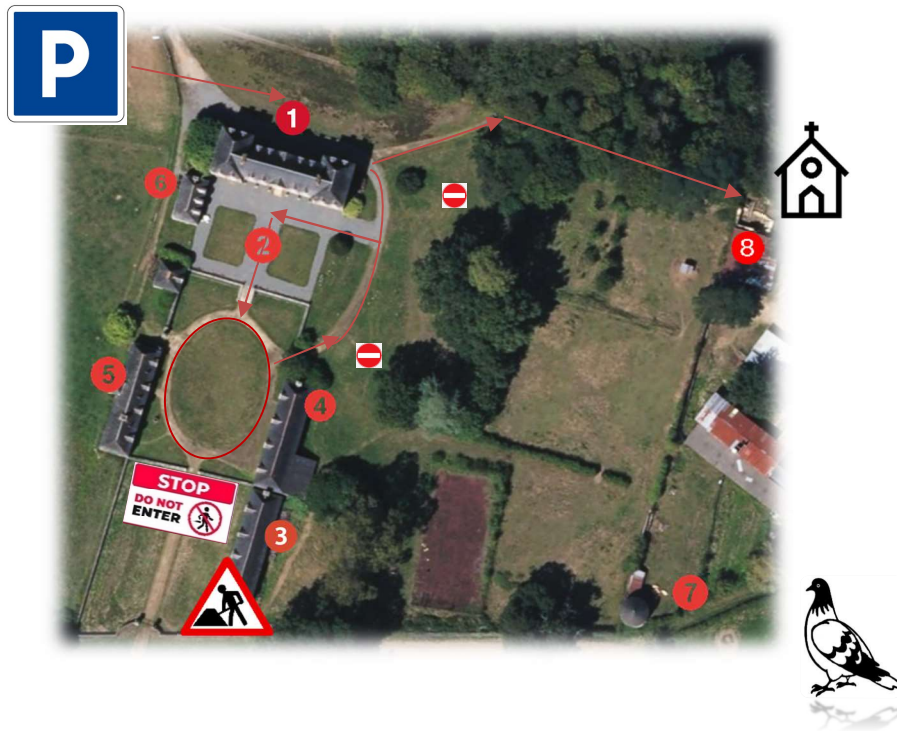
Listed in the inventory of Historical Monuments

Dear visitors, welcome to the Château de Léhélec.



There is no guide available today, but you are welcome to visit the property free of charge. Please respect the premises, follow the indicated route, and **refrain from going to the pond.**

Please note that restoration works are currently taking place. For your own safety, **entry into the construction area is prohibited.**



The Castle

→ Head towards the main entrance gate (north facade). 1

The castle, built around 1660 in the early years of Louis XIV's reign, is in the Louis XIII style. The walls are made of ferruginous shale from the Béganne quarries. The surrounding of the doors and windows is made of Péaule granite (from a neighboring town). The cornices and dormer windows are made of tuffeau, a white stone from Anjou. Until the 1950s, the walls were entirely covered with plaster. The shape of the openings is "basket handle" and the roof has a "pagoda" style with an offset that allows rainwater to be projected far from the walls.

Looking towards the forest, you can see the old avenue of beech trees, straight and steep, which led directly to the castle's threshold. In the early 20th century, to prevent cars from arriving too quickly, it was deemed safer to create the current driveway away from the main entrance.

Once, a two-meter-high wall stood twenty meters from the north facade, surrounding the castle. At that time, it was no longer used for defense but to protect against trespassers and wolves.

The history of the *Le Mintier de Léhélec* family is symbolized by the coats of arms of two families displayed on the pediment (*at the very top, above the door*). On the left is the coat of arms of the Le Mintier family, consisting of a notched cross. On the right is the coat of arms of the *Bocan de Léhélec* family, displaying three crescents and two clovers. These two coats of arms indicate that the families took part in the early crusades.

In 1578, *François Le Mintier*, governor of Redon, married Marie Bocan, the *Lady of Léhélec* and the only daughter of a former royal councilor. The castle did not yet exist, and it was their grandson, Jean, one of the hundred gentlemen of the House of King Louis XIV, who had it built. Upon the death of Marie's parents, the name *Bocan* was taken up, and the *Le Mintier de Léhélec* lineage was established. The property has remained in the same family for fourteen generations.

The Courtyards and Outbuildings

→ Go around the castle to discover the outbuildings.



The south facade of the castle is identical to the north facade, and the *Le Mintier* coat of arms can be seen on the pediment.

In front of you are the three courtyards: the first is the courtyard of honor, the second is the service courtyard, and the third is the farmyard.



The farmyard, **3** also known as the lower courtyard or lower farmyard, used to house farm buildings. Only the stable, built in 1741, and a bread oven remain. This courtyard is currently not accessible due to rehabilitation work.



In the service courtyard, there were stables for horses, carriages, and accommodations for grooms and the coachman. The building **4** dates back to 1706.



The manor, **5** built in 1554 by the *Bocan de Léhélec* family, was the residence of the *Bocan-Le Mintier* couple. It has been preserved in its original state.

The dormer windows, in the Breton Renaissance style, with pediments alternating between triangles and semi-circles, were added later.

You can once again notice the beautiful sloping roofs, typical of old houses in Morbihan, known as "pagoda roofs," as well as the air vents on the manor's roof that provided ventilation for hay or grain stored in the attic.



The most recent outbuilding is the small house in the courtyard of honor or masters' courtyard. It was built in 1900 for the following reason: since the castle is situated on a rocky outcrop, it was not possible during its construction to have kitchens in the basement as was commonly done. Having a kitchen on the ground floor was excluded due to the risk of fire and odors. Consequently, the kitchen remained in the manor, resulting in dishes arriving cold at the castle's dining room.

The great-grandmother of the current owner, tired of this inconvenience, had this small house built to accommodate the kitchen, which was eventually arranged in the castle in 1930.

The Ruins of the Chapel

→ Walk back towards the castle taking the right path.



The dovecote

As you leave the second courtyard, you will also notice on your right the dovecote bordering the property on the southeast side (*please stay on the path*). In the past, there used to be a dovecote in every castle; pigeons were raised for food, and their droppings served as excellent fertilizer.

→ Then continue along the path that leads into the woods.



The chapel of the castle is believed to date back to the early 17th century. It was allegedly burned during the Revolution, like all the chapels in the area. It was located at the northeast corner of the enclosing wall, with its door opening onto the interior of the property. Today, you can still observe the paved floor, the granite altar stone, and four sections of the wall with three arrow slits, which attest to the defensive nature of this chapel. Next to it, a small grotto covers what could be a

Venetian tomb with a stele in the foreground. This tumulus and stele have been cataloged by the Polymathic Society of Morbihan; they date back to 500 years BC.



Léhélec in History

- ❖ During the Revolution, the castle was uninhabited. Its owner, Marquis François Le Mintier de Léhélec, Colonel of Louis XVI's cavalry guard, was in Versailles or Paris with the king. The castle was looted, not by the revolutionaries, but by a tavern owner from Redon. Everything disappeared, and nothing was ever recovered.
- ❖ After the thieves left, the Chouans, who dominated the region, asked the Marquis for permission to store weapons there that were arriving from England via the Vilaine River.
- ❖ Marquis *François Le Mintier de Léhélec* (1753-1827) was the Mayor of Vannes from 1824 to 1827.
- ❖ In 1917, American soldiers landed in Saint-Nazaire; they were trained and stationed in the vicinity of Redon. A number of officers would come to relax at Léhélec during their leave.
- ❖ During World War II, the castle, lacking a telephone, electricity, and running water, did not interest the German army. However, in 1944-45, Léhélec hosted a company of F.F.I. (French Forces of the Interior) resistance fighters whose objective was to prevent German soldiers from crossing the Vilaine River to resupply.
- ❖ We hope you enjoyed your visit, and we thank you for your visit. Please note that the castle will be open for visits (both interior and exterior) during the Heritage Days (September 16th and 17th).

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