

The castle, on the low courtyard side

Service quarters (1) - Garden and Fontaine de Fortune (2)

The visit starts with the **service quarters (1)** built along the Rhone. In 1457, all the equipment required for preparing meals was to be found there : copper cooking pot, spits, dressers, tables, trestles. The apothecary of the Old Hospital of Tarascon offers an exceptional collection of medicine jars, tripods and urns. These come from a donation which the owner of the Manufacture Royale de Faïences (Royal Ceramic Factory) in Montpellier, Jacques Ollivier, made to the congregation of the Daughters of Charity, the hospital's manager, in the 18th century. Leave the service quarters behind and access the **garden (2)** dominated by the cypress tree planted in 1938. At the foot of the lime tree, you will see the **Fontaine de Fortune**, an allusion to the book by King René of Anjou, the Livre du Coeur d'amour épris, in which the Knight Coeur, an allegory and a literary incarnation of the King, stops off for the night in front of the fountain's black threshold, from which flows the evil water.

The castle, on the ceremonial courtyard side

Watchtower and potern gate (3) - Ceremonial courtyard and Gallery (4)

The **watchtower and potern gate (3)** are a function of the defense of the seigniorial house. The visit continues towards the ceremonial courtyard and the seigniorial quarters. In the Middle Ages, the **ceremonial courtyard (4)** provided a central living area, where the castle's life was staged. It connects the staterooms, service rooms and the home of the Princes of Anjou. The staircase, with nineteen windows, leads directly to the terrace. The private oratory of Queen Isabelle of Lorraine, the first wife of King René of Anjou, rests on the turret of this staircase. It is still possible to see the remains of the vaults anchored in the western façade.

In a corner, you will see the busts of King René I (1409-1480) and his second wife Jeanne de Laval (1433-1498). The Latin inscription below the niche reads: "These divine heroes, rewarded by the fleur-de-lis of France and the Cross, advance side-by-side, preparing their departure for heaven".

Large cellar (5) - Chantres Chapel (6) - Chapel of the Virgin (7)

The **large cellar (5)** supports the main **gallery (4)** with ribbed vaulting decorated with sculpted bases (fighting, dragon scenes). The area dedicated to prayer comprises two chapels, the **chapel of the Virgin (7)** and the **chantres chapel (8)**. The choir in the chapel of the Virgin is decorated with a depiction of the Coronation of the Virgin and capitals with plant motifs. The nave is decorated with consoles depicting old men, prophets, plants and a representation of the devil, placed under the wooden gallery.

The castle, on the Rhône side

Banquet Hall (8) - Kitchen and bread oven (9)

Retrace your footsteps to access the rooms situated on the Rhone side of the castle. The ground floor is occupied by the **banquet hall (8)** where banquets used to be organised. In 1457, there were three dining tables, two chest benches and seven stools with backrests for seating, ten trestles, a dresser, two iron andirons for the fireplaces, etc. The waste trapdoor over the river can be found at the entrance to the service room, near the main fireplace. A **kitchen and its bread oven (9)** is situated near the banquet hall.

To the first floor

Louis II and Yolande of Aragon's stateroom (10) - Louis II and Yolande of Aragon's chamber (11) - Chaplain's chamber (12)

Make your way to the first floor where you will find the **Louis II and Yolande of Aragon's stateroom (10)**. The larch wood ceiling is decorated with small painted panels, closoirs, decorated with depictions of imaginary animals, characteristic of the medieval bestiary (centaur, dragon, siren, unicorn, and winged horse). The **Louis II and Yolande of Aragon's chamber (11)** was connected to this large room. Its furnishings included a bedstead with a cover decorated with leopards and lions, a bed warmer, a hanging depicting the story of Bertrand du Guesclin and a chandelier.

The **chaplain's chamber (12)** leads to the gallery built in 1474 in the chapel of the Virgin.

The second floor

Large guest chamber (13) - Grande garde-robe (14)

Retrace your footsteps to the staircase and discover a majestic chamber, known in 1457 as the **large guest chamber (13)**. Next to it is the **grande garde-robe (14)**, which was used as a storeroom. Tapestries, chests, benches, covers, etc. were stored below the vaults.

The terrace (15)

The staircase provides access to the **terrace (15)** and offers the opportunity to enjoy the views over the historical centres of Tarascon and Beaucaire, the River Rhone, the Alpilles Mountains, the Montagnette and the plain around Tarascon. In order to access the town side of the castle, it is necessary to descend via the northern turret.

The castle, on the town side

The clock chamber (16)

The apartments of the Princes of Anjou and their guests start with the **clock chamber (16)** situated in the round tower, where a mechanical clock used to be housed. The tiles date from the 18th century and bear witness to the room's use as a prison.

Captain's apartments

Large captain's chamber (17)

The chambre de parement (17) has ribbed vaulting. On the walls, it is still possible to see the nails used to fasten the wall hangings.

Small chamber (18) - Captain's chamber (19)

The room provides access to a small chamber (18) and a square chamber (19) decorated with sculpted bats.

Princes' private chapel (20)

The chapel (20) has two royal oratories, furnished with a window seat and a lectern. The choir is decorated with a painted blazon depicting the coat-of-arms of Princes Louis II and Louis III : fleurs-de-lis and Jerusalem Cross.

Small steam chamber (21)

A small chamber (21) leads to the étuve du roi, or bathroom, the floor of which was heated with an oven.

To the second floor

René I large chamber (22) - René I writing cabinet (23)

Take the ceremonial staircase to the second floor. To the right, is the **René I large chamber (22)**. The room has a mantelpiece and a restored ceiling. It is connected to the **René I writing cabinet (23)**, which used to have attractive furnishings : a writing desk covered with red fabric and a pine footrest, a large ewer, a globe, a horse tooth case, an iron compass, a quiver made from boiled leather, a Moorish stirrup, a small horn, a green lizard skin whistle, *etc.*

Queens' apartments.

Ladies chamber (24) - Ladies large chamber (25) - Small chambers (26 & 27)

Retrace your footsteps to the Ladies chamber. Prior to 1434, the apartments were occupied by Queen Margaret of Savoy, the wife of King Louis III, the oldest brother of King René. The rooms on this floor start with a **chamber (24)**. Next to it, the **Ladies large chamber (25)** has a remarkable painted ceiling, decorated with animals and geometric motifs. It is connected to **two small chambers** : one overlooking the ceremonial courtyard (26), with the other situated in the round tower (27). It has a remarkable larch wood painted ceiling underlined with a frieze sculpted and painted with plant motifs.

To the first floor

Small chamber (28)

The staircase provides access to the first floor leading to the apartments occupied successively by Kings Louis II and Louis III, the King's seneschal, Pierre de Beauvau, and the Queens Yolande of Aragon, Isabelle of Lorraine and Jeanne de Laval.

The small chamber (28) has a great deal of graffiti, including an engraving by Nicolas Poncet in 1748. It addresses passers-by with these words : "CY. GISENT. ETE. TROIS. BON. GARCON. PASSANT. NE. TINFORME. LA. CAUSE. POURQUOY. IL. Y. ETION. PASSE. ET. PRIE. DIEV. POUR. LEUR. CONVERSION".

Seneschal's large chamber (29) - Senescha's chamber and oratory (30) - Small Chamber (31) - Watchtower chamber (32)

This leads to the **Seneschal's large chamber (29)** which has a large fireplace decorated with Pierre de Beauvau's blazon depicting four lions. The **Seneschal's chamber and oratory (30)** has a fireplace and latrines. In 1457, it used to house a rich selection of furnishings, including a sideboard, bed, two Florene style chests, a new retable depicting Christ in the arms of the Virgin, *etc.* The room was decorated with embroidered canvases. Retrace your footsteps and cross the **small chamber (31)** leading to the **watchtower chamber (32)** : the latter housed the King's guard and ensured the defence of the residence.

Chamber and graffiti (33)

Go to the staircase and access the last chamber (33) used as a prison in the 15th century. The latter is covered with graffiti of medieval boats, warships, carracks (a sort of caravel), galleasses (merchant vessels), engraved by Catalanian sailors, who were prisoners of the King. Seventy similar items of graffiti have been discovered in a prison situated beneath the chapelle basse. The room also offers religious style graffiti (text invoking the Book of Job, an engraved altar dedicated to the Virgin, a way of the cross) and profane style graffiti (game of chess and of backgammon).

Leave this chamber and make your way to the exit, the garden and the shop.

THE CASTLE'S ORGANISATION IN THE 15TH CENTURY

In the Middle Ages, the layout of the rooms was adapted to suit the needs of the court. The service quarters on the garden side were occupied by the King's servants. The seigniorial quarters were home to the King's court and had many rooms and common areas which provided the stage for the princes' daily lives. The large rooms on the town side were called *chambres de parement*. With a large fireplace richly decorated with tapestries, they were reserved for receptions. The chambers were very comfortable and were fitted with a canopy bed or *chât*, a fireplace and latrines. They were reserved for lords and their guests. The apartments also offered several small chambers, where the princes' close friends were housed.



THE CASTLE, HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY ART

Tarascon Castle is a platform for the dissemination of contemporary creation. Every year, the fortress's mazelike rooms provide the setting for a dialogue between the artists of the Princes of Anjou and guest contemporary artists who are offered the opportunity to express themselves within its walls. The castle has already played host to the works of Pierre Huyghe, Claude Lévêque, Michel Verjux, Wendy Jacob, Bertrand Lamarche, Beranrd Moninot, James Lee Byars, Jürgen Albrecht, Gerwald Rockenschaub, Jean-Michel Othoniel, Johan Creten, Dominique Angel, Christian Lacroix, Nicolas Rubinstein, Bernard Pourrière, Ariane Michel, Maïder Fortuné, Violaine Laveaux, and Marie Voignier. The monument's contemporary destiny continues.

TARASCON CASTLE



HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The castle, home of the Princes of Anjou

Tarascon Castle was built between 1400 and 1435 by the Dukes of Anjou, the Counts of Provence, Louis II (1384-1417) and Louis III (1417-1434). Tarascon was the regional base for their political ambitions in the Mediterranean. The castle had a military and residential function. Its architecture is reminiscent of Saint-Antoine Basilica built in Paris by the King of France Charles V (1364-1380). The work carried out by King René I (1409-1480) bears witness to a desire to improve the comfort of the castle and embellish it.

The castle, royal and republican prison

On the death of the last Count of Provence, Charles du Maine, in 1481, Provence became part of the Kingdom of France. The fortress became a military prison. A garrison was established there and the rooms were turned into collective prison cells. The walls were engraved with a great deal of graffiti (boats, names and dates of imprisonment) by the soldiers. At a later date, the prison also housed several common law prisoners, men women and children.

The castle, a listed monument

The castle appeared on the first list for the protection of French monuments in 1840. The very first restoration works commenced in the 19th century and continued after the prison's closure in 1926. Several chief architects in charge of historical monuments have participated in the monument's restoration: Henri Révoil, Jean Camille and Jules Formigé, Jean Saunier, Jean-Pierre Dufoix, and François Botton. On Sunday 12 March 1933, the castle opened its doors to visitors. Since 1 January 2008, the castle, a public cultural service, has been the property of the Municipality of Tarascon.

TARASCON CASTLE

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