IN THE LAND OF
Madame de Sévigné
DISCOVERING THE VITRÉ COUNTRYSIDE
The Marquise de Sévigné was an inquisitive, cultivated and generous woman made famous by her letters, true gems of French literature. In following this itinerary, you will cross the Vitré region, where she stayed on many occasions, and discover the richness of its cultural and natural heritage and its wealth of leisure activities.

A medieval heart
It seems to have popped straight out of a fairytale … and yet Vitré castle is not a dream, it really is one of the most beautiful citadels in France, as Victor Hugo did not fail to point out in his day. Built at the end of the 11th century on a rocky spur overlooking the Vilaine River, it closed one of the Brittany "marches" and provided the region, which at that time was a Duchy, with protection from foreign invasion. Barons and counts, one after the other, lived within its walls. Visit the museum to find out more! The castle is one of the things not to be missed along this itinerary, but it is also worth taking the time to idle a little in the walled town, looking upwards so as to appreciate the wealth of its multicoloured and slate timber-framed façades, which are a reminder of the overseas merchants who once upon a time made the town so prosperous. More wealth at the Saint-Nicolas Museum, where you will see a collection of religious gold and silverware dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. A powerful medieval atmosphere pervades the up-and-down alleys and shady squares as far as the church of Notre-Dame, a flamboyant Gothic pearl. Not far from Argentré-du-Plessis stands Rochers Castle, which was rebuilt by the Sévignés in the 16th century and became Madame de Sévigné’s Brittany residence during the 17th century. You will be able to visit the French-style garden, the tower, the chapel that she had built between 1671 and 1675 and the Park, whose alleys she named.

Le Faucillonnaie Manor (Montreuil-sous-Pérouse) houses a rural heritage museum. There are plenty of other architectural surprises here and there along the itinerary, such as Montautour, perched almost two hundred metres above the Vitré countryside, and Bois Cornillé Castle at Val d’Izé, the former home of Pierre Landais which was restored in Neo-Gothic style in the 19th century. It is also worth stopping to look inside the church in Champeaux - the former collegiate church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine (15th – 16th centuries) houses more than one treasure,
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including some remarkable stained glass windows, Renaissance stalls and a high altar. You will also be able to admire the 16th century wood-panelled retable and the canons’ "Cloister".

And water becomes a mirror …

History may be present all the way along this route, but nature too knows how to adorn its finest attire and entice you into exploration or mere relaxation at every turn. The many natural and artificial lakes, some intimate, some impressive, reflect the loveliest colours the sky and their banks have to offer. Here, a footpath runs alongside the Rochers-Sévigné lakes; there, another will take you around the Haute-Vilaine artifical lake. Sometimes a timid and fleeting green trickle appears, and at others, the Vilaine River stretches out in full glory.

A famous letter writer

Independent and educated, the Marquise de Sévigné (1626-1696) has made a lasting impression on French literature. Because she regularly lived far away from her children in Rochers-Sévigné Castle, she began an intensive exchange of correspondence with them that was to last a quarter of a century! Some of the most beautiful letters written were to her eldest daughter, the Countess of Grignan, whom she considered to be “the prettiest girl in France”. Madame de la Fayette and even her cousins were also regular correspondents. Her letters were only published after her death, and it wasn’t until 1818 that they were published in full, giving rise to an enthusiasm that has so far never faded.
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Sport and relaxation

Leave your vehicle behind and enjoy some of the many leisure activities offered along the Land of Madame de Sévigné itinerary. Choose an original break, such as at the Haute Vilaine watersports base, La Valière, Châtillon-en-Vendelais, La Cantache (Champeaux, Montreuil-sous-Pérouse) and Le Pertre, which are ideal for walking (footpaths), line fishing (as long as you hold an APPMA fishing card), birdwatching… and even sailing! The major hiking trail, the GR 37, crosses part of the area, and mountain bikers and horse riders alike will all be able to find a track or path suitable for their favourite way of getting around.

La Roulade Sévigné

Our region’s gastronomic speciality, the “Roulade Sévigné”, is a delightful combination of guinea fowl, walnuts, mushrooms, reinette apples and cider. Something to help you discover the tastes of our local land, brought together in ingenious fashion around a poultry-based stuffing…

The countryside around Vitré is a composition of peaceful pictures on both sides of the road, its green monochrome divided up by the darkest hedges reaching as far as the eye can see. The area’s parks and gardens also provide the opportunity for some pleasant walks in the heart of Vitré, such as the Jardin du Parc and the Pré des Lavandières, or at the foot of a castle, such as the French style garden in Rochers Castle estate, traced out according to a design by Le Nôtre.
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If you are looking for somewhere to stay, a restaurant, a brochure…

Contact

• Office de Tourisme du Pays de Vitré
Place du Général-de-Gaulle
35500 Vitré
Tel.: +33 (2)99 750446
Fax: +33 (2)99 740201
Email: info@ot-vitre.fr
www.ot-vitre.fr

• Pays Touristique des Portes de Bretagne
Le Balon
35150 Piré-sur-Seiche
Tel.: +33 (2)99 445844
Fax: +33 (2)99 445845
Email: tourisme@portes-de-bretagne.com
www.portes-de-bretagne.com

• Comité du Tourisme de Haute Bretagne Ille-et-Vilaine
4, rue Jean-Jaurès
BP60149
35101 Rennes cedex 3
Tel.: +33 (2)99 784740
Email: contact@bretagne35.com
www.bretagne35.com

Practical Information

In the land of Madame de Sévigné, discoveries galore

Champeaux
• Former collegiate church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine
Open daily.
Contact: Office de Tourisme du Pays de Vitré

Montautour
• La Rivière Rabault Manor house
Open to visitors in July and August.

Montreuil-sous-Pérouse
• La Faucillonnaie Museum
The rural heritage of the Pays de Vitré

Val d’Izé
• Bois Cornillé Castle
Gardens can be visited in July and August.
Contact: Office de Tourisme du Pays de Vitré

Vitré
• The four museums: open all year round.
Contact the Museums by calling +33 (0)2 99 75 04 54 to find out the different prices and opening times for different periods.
• Vitré Castle museum
Collections referring to the history of Vitré, 19th century painting gallery, painted enamel retable from the 1540s.
• Rochers-Sévigné Castle museum
(Artist-bedroom of the Pieux road)
To see: Former Orangerie in which there is an exhibition about Madame de Sévigné, French garden traced out by André Le Nôtre (1689), chapel (1671), the castle’s north tower, whose collections stand witness to the many times the letter writer stayed in the castle between 1644 and 1690. The Park and ornamental wood are freely accessible.

Saint-Nicolas Museum (15 rue Pasteur)
The former Hospital chapel has kept the tomb of its founder, Robert de Goumenel (15th century), frescoes (16th century), and a Baroque-style high altar (1712). A remarkable collection of 16th and 17th century religious gold and silverware is exhibited in the former Augustine Nuns’ Chancel.
• La Faucillonnaie Museum (see Montreuil-sous-Pérouse)
• Musée de L’Abéille Vivante (Living Bee Museum)
18 rue de la Briquepoterie
To find out more about the fascinating and mysterious world of bees. Tours every afternoon except Sundays in July and August.
Contact: +33 (0)99 75 04 56

Church of Saint-Pierre Notre-Dame
Place Notre-Dame
Open daily.

Golf Club des Rochers
Route d’Argentré-du-Plessis
Call +33 (0)2 99 75 04 54

Jardin du Parc
Boulevard Chateaubriand

Le Pré des Lavandières
At the foot of the castle, washed by the Vilaine River.

The Pays de Vitré Tourist Office also offers a large number of guided theme tours, by prior booking.

Walking in the land of Madame de Sévigné
Special IGN map Pays des Marches de Bretagne
Vitré “Topoguide” on sale, 5 €, at the Tourist Office (16 leaflets bringing together 50 circuits).
Circuits can also be viewed on the websites: www.portes-de-bretagne.com Leisure Sports section, or www.paysdevitre.org in the Discover–Nature section.