



Guédelon

A castle in the making

Deep in secluded woodland, an abandoned quarry reveals a landscape seemingly untouched since the dawn of the last millennium. Out of this wood and stone, quarrymen, stonemasons, woodcutters, carpenters, blacksmiths, tile makers, basket makers, rope makers, carters and their horses are working together to complete a castle, using 13th century building techniques.

Guédelon: the ultimate in grand design

Hundreds and thousands of visitors from across the globe have flocked to see the only construction site of its kind in the world. Throughout the seasons they have watched Guédelon's workers rise to this extraordinary challenge; the curtain walls, the postern, the fixed bridge, the vaulted guard rooms, the groin-vaulted cellar, and the roof timbers have all been built under their watchful gaze.

Guédelon's 14th season opens and the team is as motivated as ever. In 2011, the team of workers will be building the cross-ribbed vault in the lord's chamber and will finish the great hall's roof.

Guédelon: illuminating the Middle Ages

It is impossible to visit castles and cathedrals of the Middle Ages without wondering how these buildings were constructed, where the materials came from, how they were transported, which tools were used or how such heavy loads were hoisted. Guédelon sheds light on these mysteries of the medieval world.

Guédelon: learning from experience

At a time when environmental protection is of such concern, Guédelon provides practical lessons in sustainable building for green constructors of tomorrow. This pioneering construction site offers information on making and using wattle and daub, rubble walling, lime-based mortar, traditional terracotta roof tiles, oak shingles, flax and hemp ropes.

Inspired by the past, this building site has caught the attention of the 21st century.





Guédelon

The dream becomes reality

Guédelon: an act of folly

Michel Guyot, owner and restorer of Saint Fargeau castle, first had the idea of building a 13th century style fortress following the discovery that the 15th century red bricks of his castle obscured the stone walls of a much older stronghold. His dream was to build a castle just as it would have been in the Middle Ages; an idea which some found mildly amusing and others dismissed as outright folly.

However, Maryline Martin, now project director, was inspired by the exciting potential for the venture to provide a boost for the people of the region. It took several months to bring together and mobilise all the various different partners: architects, archaeologists and financial backers. The site - in the heart of Guédelon forest - was found; a site which offered not only all the resources required for building a castle - a stone quarry, an oak forest and a water supply - but in sufficient quantities to satisfy the demands of this gigantic site.

The first team started work and on June 20th 1997 the first stone was laid.

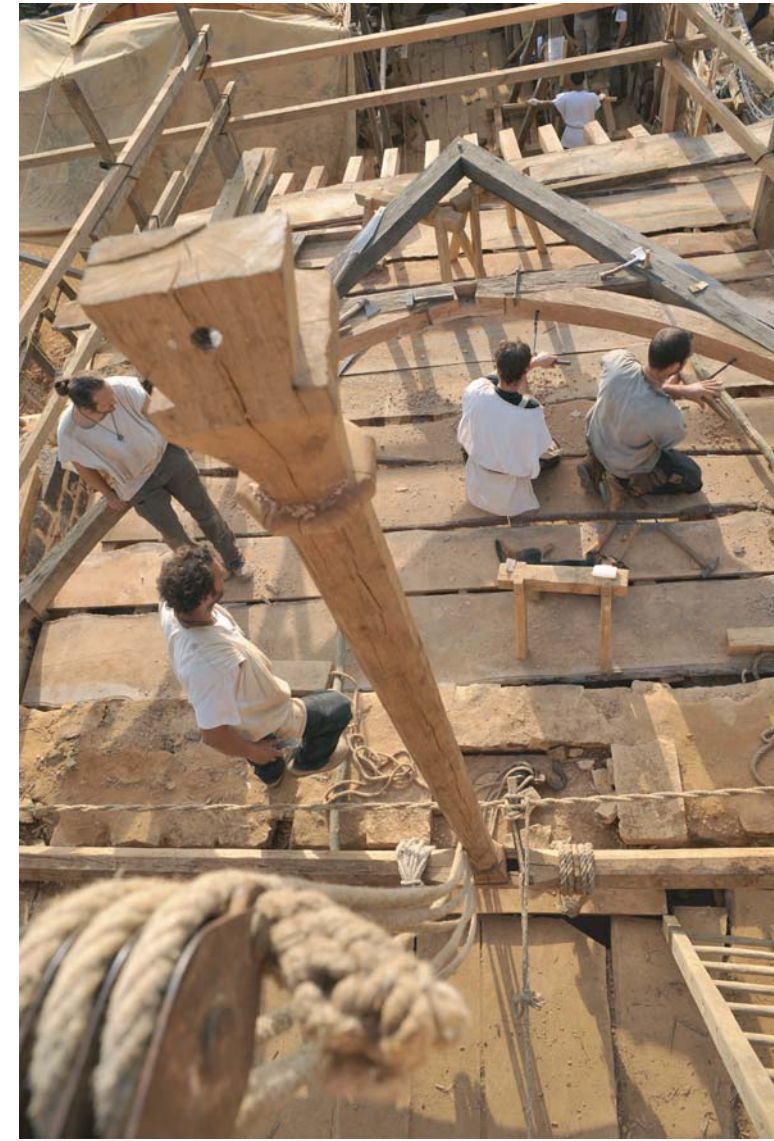
Guédelon: a shared passion

Today, Guédelon employs some 50 people, of whom 35 work on the building site itself. Some were already qualified, but others have acquired their skills on site; however, at Guédelon, the ability to communicate with the visiting public is just as important as mastering a craft.

Guédelon: be part of the adventure

Each year, around 300 people choose to play an active role in the venture. From a wide range of backgrounds - castle enthusiasts, complete novices eager to learn, or work-experience students - they all come in order to learn more about the building techniques used on site. For a period of several days, they step into the shoes of a medieval builder.

The site is overseen by the master mason: Florian Renucci. He is responsible for the day-to-day running of the site and, along with the project's managers, ensures that the work carried out is historically, architecturally and archaeologically accurate.





Guédelon

Hands-on learning

Guédelon: experimental archaeology in action

Our task is to recreate the construction techniques and the logistical organisation of an early 13th century building site. We base much of our work on medieval financial records, illustrations on illuminated manuscripts, cathedral stained-glass windows and the evidence of contemporary chroniclers. These sources provide us with an insight into the tools used and the building techniques employed. However, in order to ensure that our working practice matches, as closely as possible, that of the 13th century, the project's founders and the master mason, insist upon the need to closely examine a number of existing castles. These 13th century castles are the last reliable witnesses left to us by history. Once examined, photographed and measured, their evidence avoids us committing unnecessary errors which would later need correcting. This way of working has allowed us to reveal some of the medieval castle builders' fascinating secrets. Among the castle's which serve as models are Ratilly (89), La Motte-Josserand (58), Dourdan (91) and Yèvre-le-Châtel (45).

Guédelon: living history

Every day, the site attempts to resolve many questions still unanswered by historians and archaeologists. The serious nature of the project demands the involvement of the academic world, and our work is monitored by both archaeologists and historians. Their involvement is of mutual benefit; they provide the project with invaluable information, while in turn, they have the unique opportunity to observe a team of builders at work on a medieval building site. They can study the skills needed, how tools are handled, and how the site is organised.

The advisory scientific committee is comprised of:

Jacques Moulin, head architect at Monuments Historiques, designer of the original Guédelon castle plans

Anne Baud, archaeologist and lecturer at Lyon 2 University

Nicolas Reveyron, art historian and lecturer at Lyon 2 University

Frédéric Epaud, archaeologist and CNRS researcher at Tours, specialist in medieval roof timbers





Guédelon

A shared passion

Guédelon: passing on knowledge

Unlike any other present-day building site, Guédelon warmly welcomes members of the public. The workers' role is to demonstrate and explain, to a wide audience, the skills of our forefathers. Stone quarrying, the building of vaulted ceilings, the blacksmith's work and the raising of roof timbers are just some of the activities which visitors can witness, at first hand, during a visit to Guédelon. The workers are always on hand to talk about their craft and the progress of the castle.

Guédelon: where history comes to life

Each year, 60,000 children visit Guédelon with their schools. The site is an excellent educational resource, bringing to life the history of the Middle Ages. Guided tours are tailored to the school curriculum and according to age groups: activity trails for primary school children and interactive guided tours for secondary school children. Pupils of all ages have the opportunity to take part in the stonecarving workshop and thus follow in the footsteps of medieval stonemasons.

Guédelon: a journey through time

In the heart of an area of outstanding natural beauty, this ever-changing site can be visited time and time again. Many of our visitors are intensely loyal and feel a real part of the venture; they regularly return to follow the construction's progress. Each season, Guédelon welcomes more than 300,000 visitors, including a large number of overseas visitors. Guided tours are available in French, English, German and Dutch. In just a few short years, Guédelon has become one of France's major tourist attractions. Employing 55 people, this venture, thanks to ticket sales and gift shop alone, is entirely self-financing.





Guédelon

The work ahead

1997



2001



2010



2025



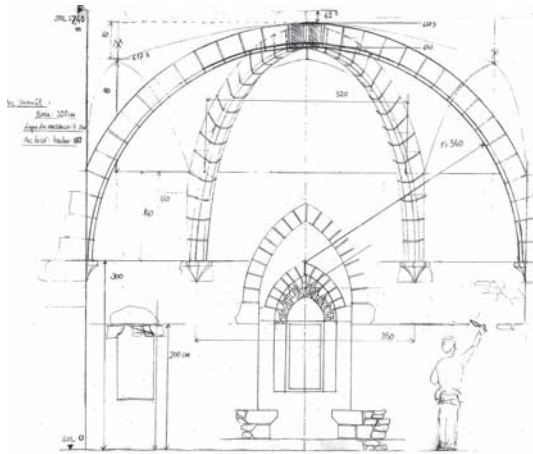


Guédelon

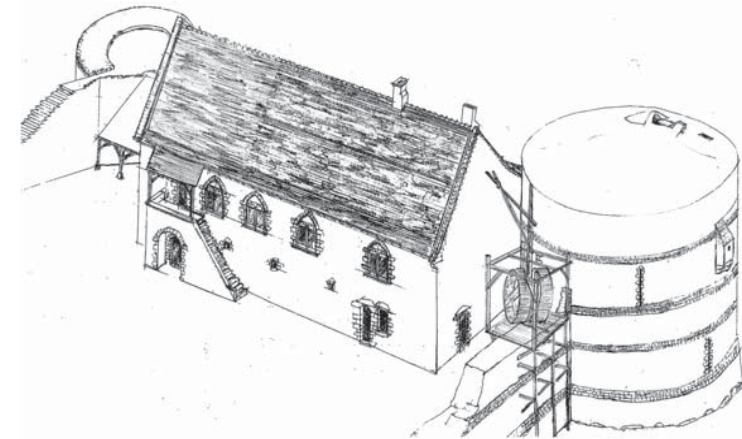
2011 programme of events



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In 2011, the team of workers will be building the cross-ribbed vault in the lord's chamber and will finish the great hall's roof.





Guédelon

Practical information

How to find us

Guédelon is situated in the *département* of Yonne, in the north-west of Burgundy, between the villages of Saint-Saveur-en-Puisaye and Saint-Amand-en-Puisaye. We are 2 hours from Paris, 1 hour 45 minutes from Orleans, 2 hours from Dijon, 1 hour 20 minutes from Bourges.
Guédelon, D955, 89520, Treigny, France

Opening times

Guédelon is open from **2nd April to 1st November 2011**.
Closed on Wednesdays, except in July and August.
Admission charges : €9 / adult €7 / child (5-17)
Dates and opening times are available on our website www.guedelon.fr

Guided tours

Unguided or guided tours (French, English, German and Dutch speaking guides available)
Stonecarving workshop available for adults and children.
For individual and family groups - no pre-booking necessary. Booking for guided visits can only be made in person at the ticket office.
For groups of 20+ pre-booking is required - guedelon@guedelon.fr

Practical information

The site is accessible to people with limited mobility.
Meals and light refreshments available on site from the Guédelon tavern.
Woodland picnic area with sheltered tables, gift shop, free car parking.
Dogs are welcome with responsible owners; all dogs must be kept on leads.





Guédelon

For more information

The books...

Philippe Minard

Guédelon, fanatics for a fortress. Aubanel

Thierry Darques

Guédelon, a castle in the making. Guédelon

and the DVD...

Guédelon, a castle in the making

84 minute documentary and children's guided tour.

English version available on DVD

Site updates

Guédelon Medieval Construction Site is constantly changing; there are always new things to see and do. Throughout the season, our free newsletter will bring you information about important developments on site, allowing you to keep up-to-date with forthcoming events and better prepare your next visit.

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