

Departure: Maison de Mélusine (Tourist office).
 The tour of Vouvant starts with the **Maison de Mélusine 1**, which nowadays houses the tourist office. Here you will be told the legend of the fairy Mélusine, half-woman and half-snake, who is supposed to have built the castle in one night with “an apron-full of stones and a mouthful of water”, and of her husband Raimondin... who found out about her secret curse causing Mélusine to flee uttering terrible threats...
 Opposite you is Chateau de la Recette (private property) so named because it was the place where the townspeople came and paid taxes in cash and kind. The **Mélusine Tower 2** is the last vestige of the château of Lusignan. This 45 metre tower stands in the corner of the square. Its circular construction is unusual at a time when most



towers were square. A chapel once backed onto it. The **Place du Bail 3** occupies the former inner courtyard of the medieval stronghold. The surrounding walls made it impregnable. The chateau had two wells cut into the rock; one of which is



32 metres deep and wide enough at the bottom for a team of horses to turn around. The square overlooks the river Mère as it meanders into the forest.
 From the square, on the left, the hamlet “le Petit Château” can be seen on the site of the Duke of Aquitaine’s hunting lodge. He founded the town between 1010-1020. Just opposite the exit of the square, a narrow entrance leads to a courtyard, called **Cour du miracle 4** evocative of Père de Montfort...
 Walking out of the courtyard, turn left into “rue du Duc d’Aquitaine”, up to **place du Corps de Garde 5**.
 Then take “rue Basse des Remparts” to reach (on the right) the “rue de la Poterne” with its dry-stone walls, which is by far the most picturesque street in town. Notice the public garden on the left, where you’ll discover one of two cannons found in the well of the “Place du Bail”. A steep cobbled pathway leads



down towards **La Poterne 6**, the only remaining town gate. The path, to your right, follows the ramparts up to the foot of the Mélusine Tower. If you continue on the

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left by taking the “chemin des Rangies”, between the river and the ramparts, you will see on the right, at the end of the footbridge, a reproduction of the grotto at Lourdes which was inaugurated in 1958. At the end of the “chemin des Rangies”, turn right, and the circuit crosses the **Romanesque bridge 7**, built between 13th and 14th centuries. Nearby was the “porte aux Moynes”, the third town gate. Having



crossed the new road, created in the 19th century to enter the town, stop for a while at the **wash house 8**, a reminder of everyday life as it was. In the bend, the “rue de l’Escalier” leads to the **Priory garden 9** alongside the sacristy. It is the best place to appreciate the apse and the octagonal bell tower of the **church 10**. Skirt around the church until you reach the entrance, remarkable for the twin doors framed by stone arches carved with varied motifs. Inside, the choir is raised above the half-buried crypt of the 11th century, rediscovered when excavations took place in the 19th century. Once back out of the church, walk to the entrance of the **Théodelin Nave 11**, named in memory of the Abbot of Maillezais to whom the Duke of Aquitaine had entrusted the construction of this monument.



Vouvant is the only fortified town in the Vendée. It was built at the beginning of the 11th century close to a forest of 20,000 acres. William V, Duke of Aquitaine, chose the site because of its excellent position. He ordered the monks living in Maillezais to build a stronghold, a church and a monastery. In the 12th century, the powerful Lusignan Family added ramparts to protect the town. At that time you could only enter the city by the three gates: “la porte Bouguerin”, “la porte aux Moynes” and “la Poterne”. The frequent rebellions of the Lords of Lusignan against the French Crown prompted John Lackland, King of England, and Saint Louis, King Louis IX of France, to deal with them severely. Century after century, famous families reigned in Vouvant up to the 17th century when Vouvant became subject to the French Crown. The names of the streets and squares of the village reflect the prominent figures of Vouvant’s often turbulent history.



Information / visits

Mairie (Town Hall)
Place de l’église ~ 85 120 Vouvant
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mairie.vouvant@wanadoo.fr
www.vendee-vouvant.com

Vouvant Tourist Office
Maison de Mélusine (muséographie)
Place du bail ~ 85 120 Vouvant
Tél. : 02 51 00 86 80
Fax : 02 51 87 47 92

Guided tours
Office du tourisme du
Pays de Fontenay-le-Comte
Tél : 02 51 69 44 99
www.tourisme-sudvendee.com

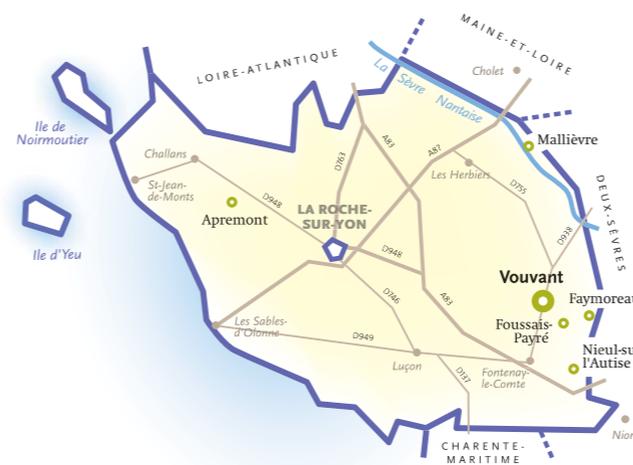
BE CAREFUL, RESPECTFUL OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND TRAFFIC REGULATIONS.



The “Petites Cités de Caractère” distinction is awarded to the little towns and villages in our region that have a remarkable architectural and natural Heritage, and meet the essential criteria when it comes to welcoming their visitors. As a guarantee for quality, this label urges the communes belonging to the network to keep on improving the emphasis placed on their attractions through restoration, promotion and activities. The Petites Cités de Caractère of the Pays de la Loire present a whole range of historical authenticity and are a reflection of the geographical territory to which they belong.

Petites Cités de Caractère des Pays de la Loire

Les Petites Cités de Caractère de la Vendée

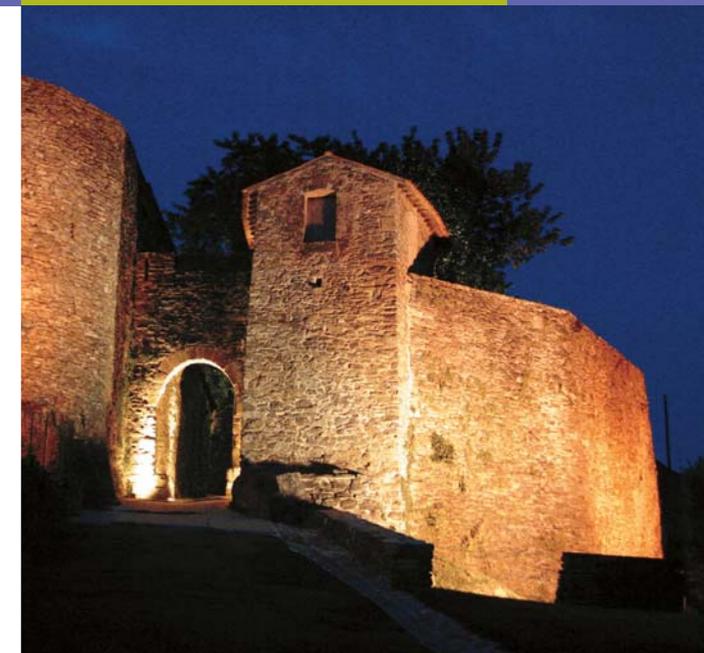


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Vouvant

Petite Cité de Caractère de la Vendée



WANDER ALONG THE NARROW STREETS BETWEEN THE SHALE-BUILT HOUSES... DISCOVER THE RAMPARTS, THE KEEP, AND THE MELUSINE TOWER NESTLING IN THE OXBOW OF THE RIVER MERE. THE PORTAL OF THE CHURCH IS A PURE JEWEL OF THE ROMANESQUE PERIOD IN THE BAS-POITOU REGION. CLOSE BY IS THE FOREST OF MERVENT-VOUVANT...

textime 06 72 66 49 71 - juillet 2009, Photos : Petites Cités de Caractère de la Vendée, mairie de Vouvant.