

# *WhatToDoWhen*

## Live the castle life #2



# WhatToDoWhen

## Live the castle life

# My opinion

I thoroughly enjoyed writing these two guides on the châteaux of Provence (Guide #1 – 8 châteaux, Guide #2 – 9 châteaux). Not only are these places beautiful, often with breathtaking views, they are also rich in history. They provide a better understanding of Provence and its past since the castles were built around 1,000 years ago. You will meet families who are deeply attached to their region. You will discover stories, some of which are surreal. You will travel back in time within these ancient places of power. Once respected, admired and feared, these castles are now yours to enjoy. Make the most of it! Who hasn't dreamed of being 1,000 years old?



[Consult the Map](#)

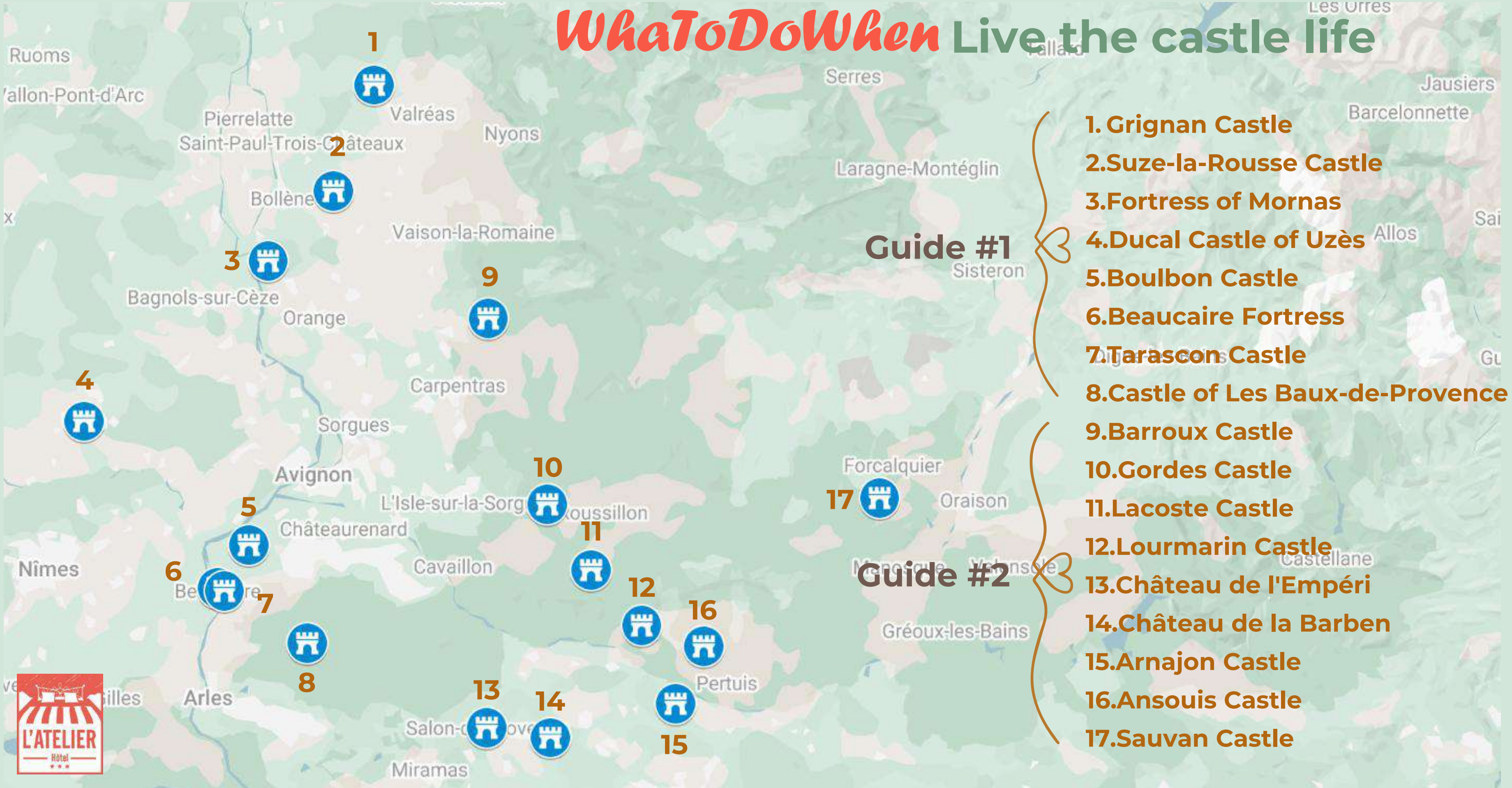


Lourmarin Castle



# MAP OF CASTLES OF PROVENCE

*WhatToDoWhen* Live the castle life



**Guide #1**

- 1. Grignan Castle
- 2. Suze-la-Rousse Castle
- 3. Fortress of Mornas
- 4. Ducal Castle of Uzès
- 5. Boulbon Castle
- 6. Beaucaire Fortress
- 7. Tarascon Castle
- 8. Castle of Les Baux-de-Provence

**Guide #2**

- 9. Barroux Castle
- 10. Gordes Castle
- 11. Lacoste Castle
- 12. Lourmarin Castle
- 13. Château de l'Empéri
- 14. Château de la Barben
- 15. Arnajon Castle
- 16. Ansois Castle
- 17. Sauvan Castle



**WhatToDoWhen**  
Live the castle life

Let us tell you the story of the fire started by German troops in 1945.



[See the Map](#)

# Château du Barroux

Located in the foothills of Mont Ventoux, it can be seen from far away, and the castle's "inhabitants" can see far into the distance. It is like a lighthouse in the middle of the Rhône Valley. Needless to say, the view from the top of this medieval fortress, which was remodelled during the Renaissance, is breathtaking! From the 12th to the 14th century, it was simply a keep surrounded by ramparts. It was shared by the powerful lords of Provence, including the famous **Baux family**. Then, in the 16th century, a count named **Henri de Rovigliasc** decided to take things further and transformed it into a prestigious residence. Everything was going rather well for this château, but the Revolution, followed by the occupation of German troops during the Second World War, left this local gem in ruins. Courageous renovation work has brought the place back to life. Don't forget to visit the distillery.

**Why do I love this château? The 5-star view and the dynamism of the owners, with the creation of a whisky distillery.**

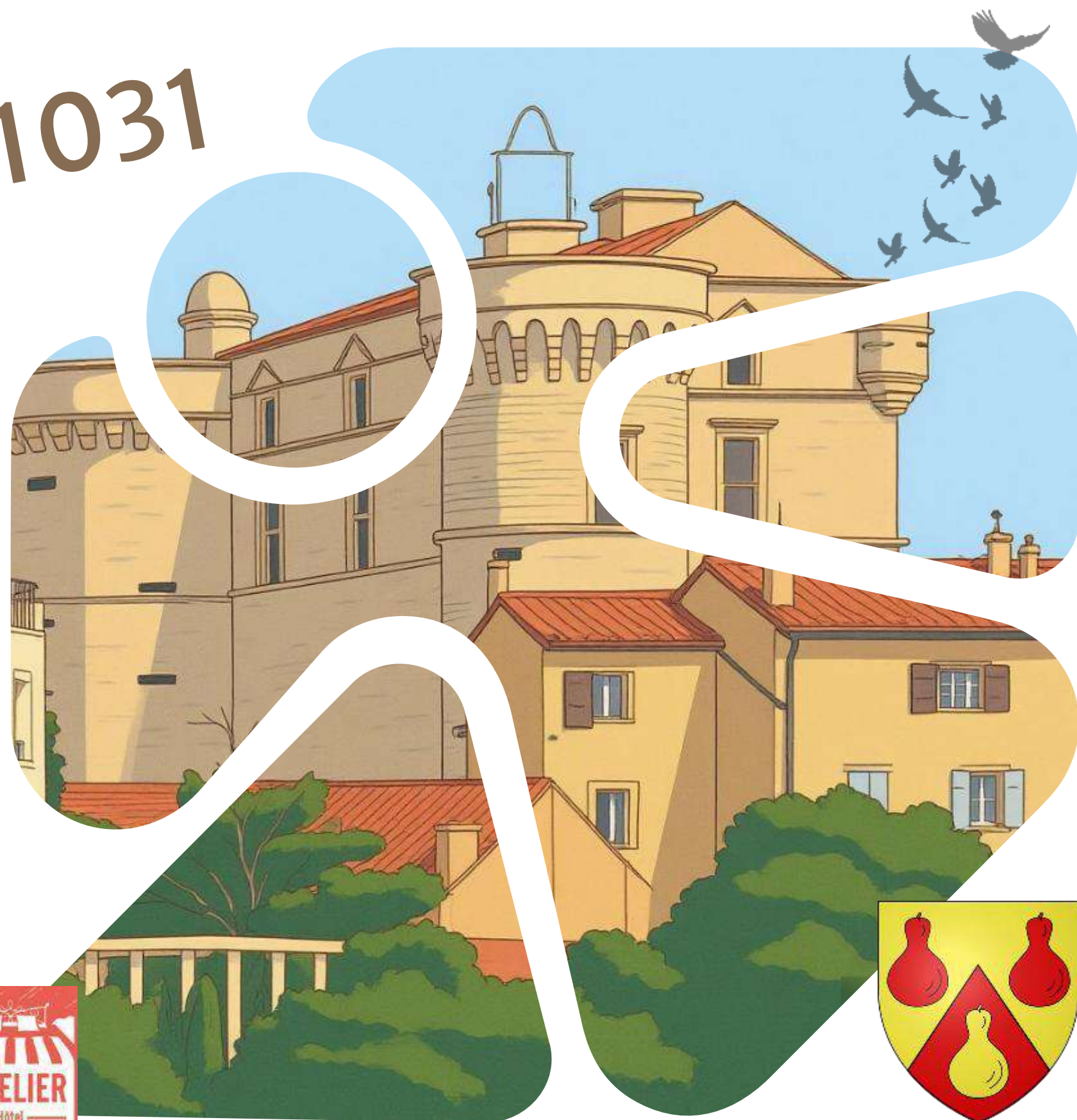
12<sup>th</sup>



# What To Do When

## Live the castle life

1031



[See the Map](#)

# Château de Gordes

The Château de Gordes is more of an austere and intimidating medieval fortress. The citadel is built on a rocky outcrop (as is often the case) in the middle of the village to protect the villagers in the event of an attack. Renovated during the Renaissance to make it more "liveable", the castle never appealed to the lords of Provence, who never lived there. Since 1811, it has been owned by the municipality of Gordes. The town hall was even located there until 2006. The building is now dedicated to art. Many renowned artists have succeeded one another, foremost among them Victor Vasarely and Pol Mara.

**Why do I love this château? For its temporary exhibitions and its accessibility to all (in the centre of village life).**

# WhatToDoWhen

## Live the castle life



[Consult the Map](#)

Great families:

De Simiane

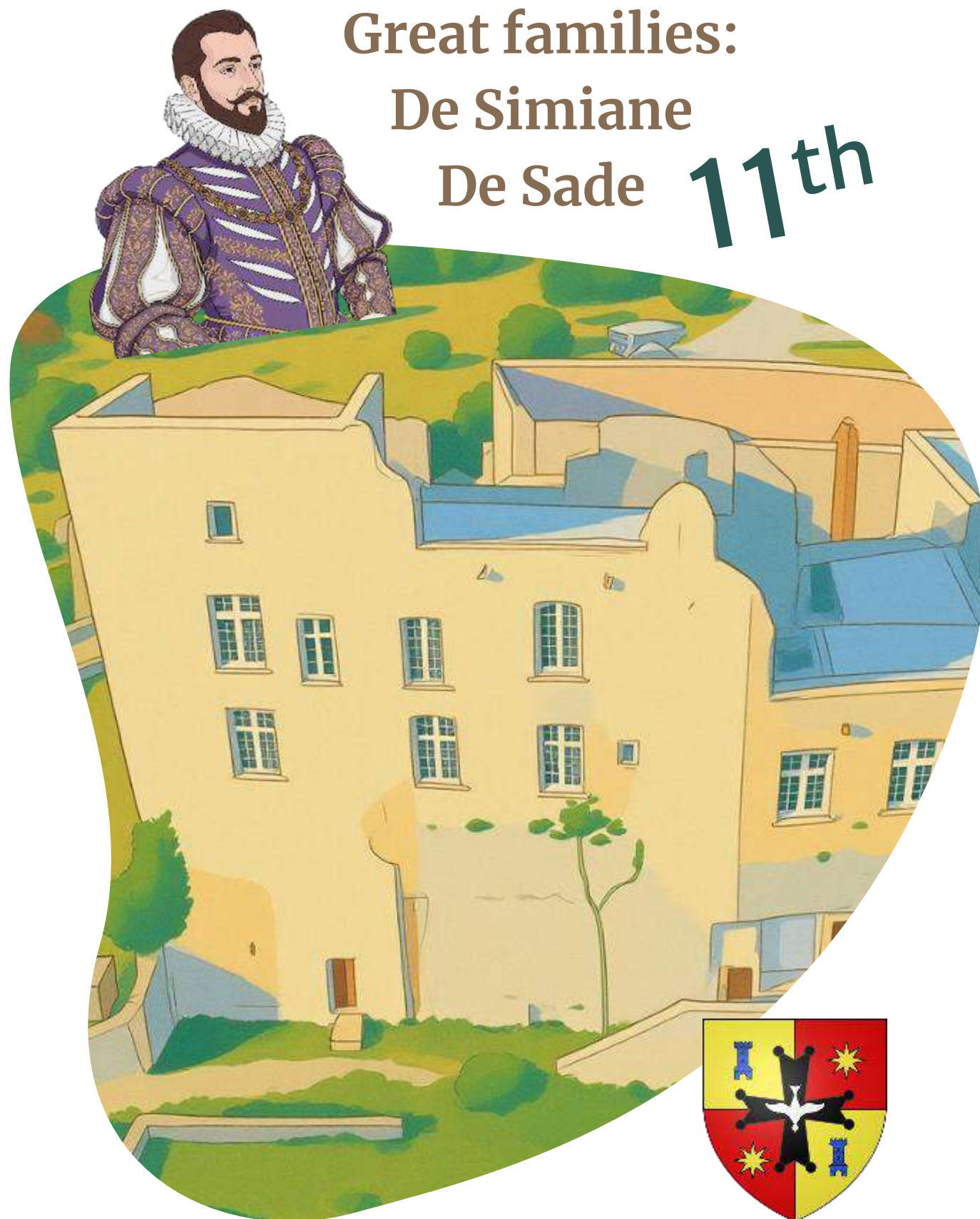
De Sade

11<sup>th</sup>

# Château Lacoste

As with Tarascon, this château belongs to a man, the famous libertine writer, **the Marquis de Sade**. He did indeed own it from 1769 onwards, but only actually stayed there until 1772. This is surprising, as the château is a thousand years old and was built and owned for over six centuries by the wealthy Simiane family. Owned by Pierre Cardin since 2001, and now by his heir, the place has been dedicated to the arts. When you visit the Château de Lacoste, you will discover an exhibition space, a fantastic view of the Luberon, and some of the Marquis' apartments. It is important to note that during the Revolution, the château was almost entirely destroyed. Nevertheless, the place remains magical!

**Why do I love this château? Because the view of the Luberon is magical!**



**WhatToDoWhen**  
Live the castle life

# Lourmarin Castle

It was a friend of the famous King René, **Foulques d'Agoult**, who built this castle in 1480. We were entering the Renaissance period, but the castle had a distinctly medieval, "old world" feel to it. His descendants would expand it a few decades later by adding a Renaissance wing, which is the one you see when you arrive at the castle. Every time I visit, I feel as though the château is open to the village, as if it belonged to everyone. During the Revolution, people preferred its lands, and no one actually lived there. The whole complex fell into ruin. Fortunately, once again, a providential man, **Robert Laurent-Vibert**, saved it. Upon his death, a foundation dedicated to culture was created and still remains in charge of this magnificent place.

**Why do I love this château? For its exhibitions and the view of the château from the village side, surrounded by its meadow.**

1480



[See  
the Map](#)

**Do you know about the castle's curse? Be careful when driving to Lourmarin!**



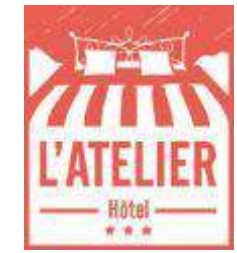
**WhatToDoWhen**  
Live the castle life

# Château de l'Empéri

The Château de l'Empéri is **the oldest fortified castle in Provence**, built in the 9th century on the Puech rock to control the Crau plain. As I often say, Provence belonged to the Holy Roman Empire for a long time, and Salon-de-Provence is no exception, hence the name given to the castle, "Empéri" = Empire. Allow 1 to 1½ hours to visit it. It includes Nostradamus' medicinal garden and a military museum with important collections entrusted to it by Les Invalides in Paris. The castle is not there to look pretty, it is there to impress its adversaries. It is a castle "in its original state", raw, austere, and ultimately very authentic. It has been little destroyed and little modified, allowing for a real journey back in time.

**Why do I love this castle? For its authentic fortified castle feel and its view from the top of the terraces.**

The castle belonged to the Archbishops of Arles for a long time (11th-15th centuries).



[Consult the Map](#)

9<sup>th</sup>



# What To Do When

## Live the castle life

There is a zoo next to the castle. It was created by the former owner to finance the upkeep of the castle.



[See the Map](#)

# Château de La Barben

Built probably before the year 1000, the small castrum has come a long way, gradually becoming a sort of imposing medieval castle, residential and elegant. The Forbin family occupied the premises from the 15th century (purchased from King René) until 1963. It's beautiful!

For me, it's the castle of my childhood, having lived a few kilometres away. The site is very beautiful and green, thanks to the small stream in the Arc valley. The castle gardens are magnificent and the building is perfectly preserved (with little damage). Today, the château has been converted into a theme park about Provence. Its new name is **Rocher Mistral**. And in my opinion, having known the château long before, it is a complete success. Admittedly, the entrance fee is more expensive, but the experience is unforgettable. Shows, entertainment and decorations bring the château back to life and immerse you in its sometimes tumultuous past.

**Why do I love this castle? It's the castle of my childhood.**



11th

**WhatToDoWhen**  
Live the castle life

# Château d'Ansouis

Located in one of the most beautiful villages in France, this 10th-century castle, converted into a pleasure residence during the Renaissance, enjoys breathtaking views of the Luberon. Purchased by a family from Aix-en-Provence in 2008, it is possible to discover it on a guided tour with the owner herself. Ansouis combines **medieval austerity**, marked by its keep on a rocky outcrop, with **Provençal charm**, thanks to its magnificent terraces and French gardens. It is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful châteaux in Provence.

**Why do I love this castle? For its Provençal beauty, from the gardens to the façades.**



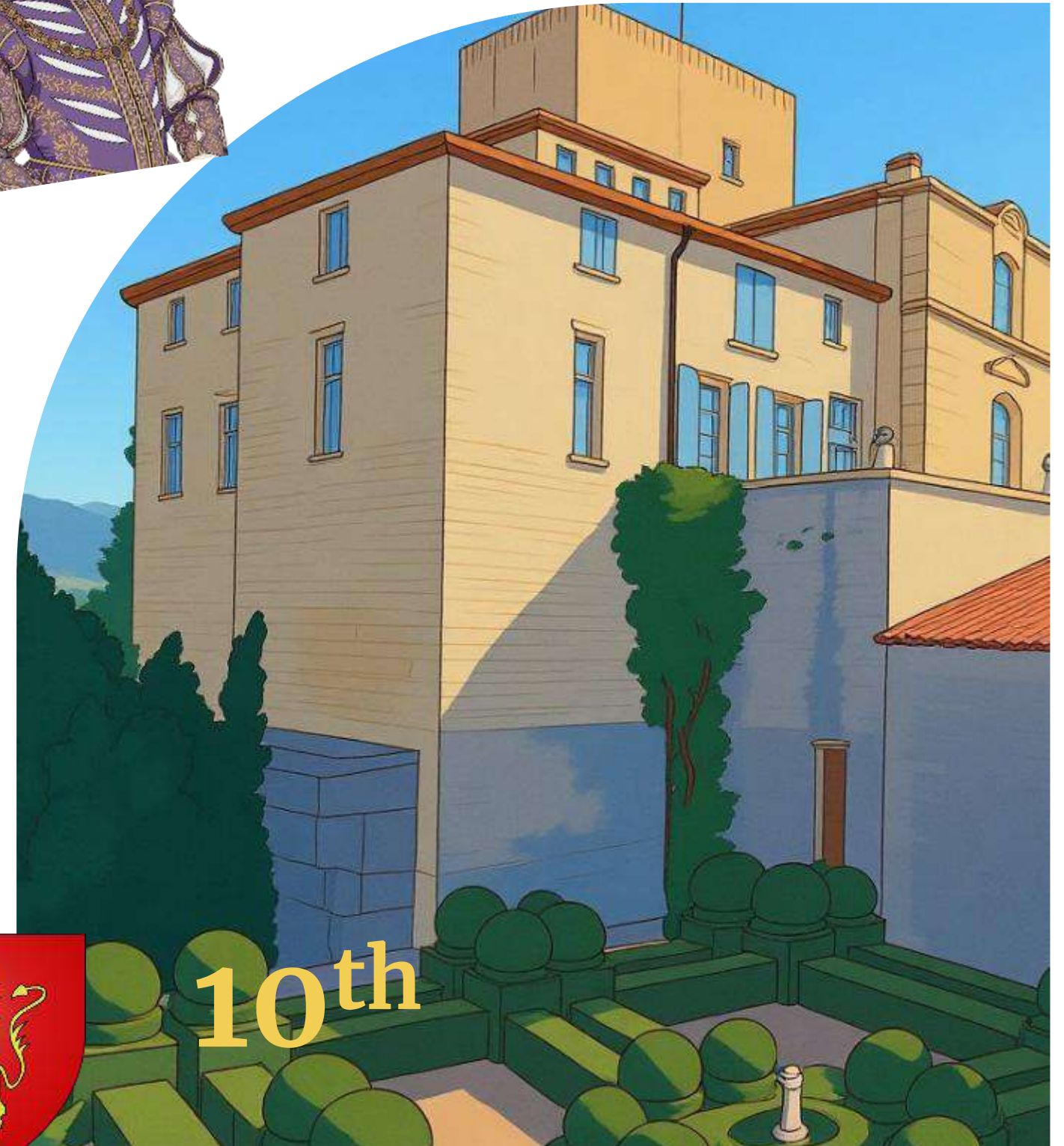
Great families:  
De Forcalquier  
Sabran



[See  
the Map](#)



10th



**WhatToDoWhen**  
Live the castle life

The Château de Sauvan is nicknamed the Petit Trianon of Provence, and it is true that the resemblance is striking.



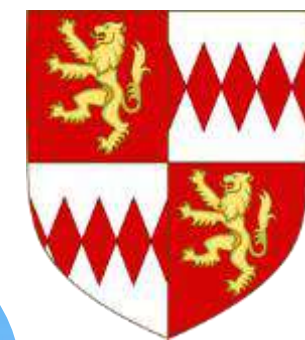
[Consult the Map](#)

# Châteaux d'Arnajon and Sauvan

We wanted to bring together these two pleasure palaces, typical of Provence. They have many things in common:

- They were built later than the other châteaux selected, in the 17th century for Arnajon and the 18th century for Sauvan, by famous Provençal families (Le Blanc de Castillon and Forbin).
- Magnificent outdoor spaces, French gardens for Sauvan, terraces and outdoor pools for Arnajon.
- You can feel the passion in the owners' words as they give the guided tour themselves. The restoration work at Sauvan is remarkable.
- A film set, notably for the filming of the movie "Un Balcon sur la Mer" with J. Dujardin. And many others...

**Why do I love these châteaux? For their authenticity and the dedication of their owners. They exude Provence.**



17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>

# Practical Guide - Castles of Provence #2



**Château du Barroux** Open every day except Tuesday, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.



**Lacoste Castle** Open every day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. (except Sundays: 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.)



**Château de l'Empéri** Open every day (except Tuesday) from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5 p.m.



**Château d'Ansouis** Open from April to September from 3pm to 4.30pm. Guided tours only.



**Château de Gordes** Open all year round from 10am to 1pm and from 2pm to 6pm.



**Lourmarin Castle** Open all year round. From 10.30am to 6.45pm (earlier in low season).



**Château de la Barben** See programme. Open from April to early November.



**Arnajon Castle** Guided tours of the gardens by reservation. Open in April.



**Château de Sauvan** Open from March to November. Guided tour at 3.30pm without reservation. Check opening days during the week.

