



CHÂTEAU DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

*2020: Live the
Grand Siècle Experience!*

Presskit - 2020

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THE CHÂTEAU DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE IN A FEW DATES

- **1641**: acquisition of the first lands of Vaux by Nicolas Fouquet and start of the works by Le Nôtre, Le Vau and Le Brun.
- **August 17, 1661**: Nicolas Fouquet offers a somptuous reception to honor the king Louis XIV.
- **September 5, 1661** : arrest of Nicolas Fouquet by d'Artagnan.
- **1705**: the widow of Nicolas Fouquet sells the estate to the Maréchal de Villars.
- **1764**: César Gabriel de Choiseul-Praslin acquires the estate of Vaux-le-Vicomte.
- **1875**: Gaston de Choiseul sells Vaux in an auction. Alfred Sommier, ancestor of the Vogüé family, buys it and undertakes to restore it.
- **1967**: Patrice de Vogüé, grand-nephew of Alfred Sommier, receives the château as a wedding gift. He opens it to public visit the following year, in 1968, to deal with the restoration costs.
- **2015**: Ascanio de Vogüé joins his brothers Alexandre and Jean-Charles at the estate's management. They become the fifth generation to insure its governance.

2020: A year focused on experience

The Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte, a 17th century masterpiece by the architect Le Vau, the painter-decorator Le Brun and the gardener Le Nôtre, will **open its doors on March 14, 2020** for the new season.

The year 2020 will be structured around the concept of experience, a new manner of putting the emphasis on the château as a Historic Monument by placing visitors center-stage, the focus of all attention.

"With our Surround-Sound Visit, we invite our visitors to take part in a play, one where they discover the History of France as if they had lived through the period; whereas with our culinary explorations, we'll share the secrets of the ingredients used in the 17th century kitchen. At the same time, each event will be focused on the Grand Siècle Experience: when leaving Vaux-le-Vicomte, we want visitors to have the impression that they have lived through a real experience, that they have shared something important with the château. We don't want to repeat the classic schema of a visit and a lesson in history: our intention is to create a climate of exchange, a real link with it." explains Ascanio de Vogüé, General Manager and Co-owner of the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte.

*The estate of Vaux-le-Vicomte spans 500 hectares, including 33 hectares of French formal gardens. It is **the largest private Historical Monument in France**. It is today owned by the Vogüé family, which ensures its preservation and management. Left to right: Alexandre, Ascanio et Jean-Charles de Vogüé*



The Culinary arts in the Grand Siècle

In the spring of 2020, the château is offering its visitors a new experience, based on gastronomy during the Grand Siècle.

Situated in the kitchen areas, this new guided visit will be conducted by an actor and will mix the discovery of the culinary arts of the 17th century and an immersion in a kitchen of the period, followed by a tasting in Vatel's kitchens. Available on weekends, holidays and during Zone C school vacations (excepting summer vacation) until November 1, this activity is included in the ticket price.

Working with the historian Dominique Michel, a specialist in the gastronomy of the Grand Siècle, the château proposes looking at recipes that were popular in Vatel's time, and sharing them with its visitors. An actor, specially trained for the occasion, will plunge visitors behind the scenes into the kitchens of the château, preparing before their eyes a 17th century recipe, one prized at the court of the Sun King!

At the end of the demonstration, each visitor will be able to taste one of these marvelous dishes.

The château will propose in 2020 new culinary animations in the kitchens.



An innovative immersive surround-sound visit

From March 14 to November 1, visitors will be able to relive the history of the 17th century, thanks to a 3-D sound system.

The immersive sound visit plunges the visitor into the center of History, which comes alive thanks to the sound environment: historic figures awake and come alive around him. The visitor is invited to discover key moments in the life of Nicolas Fouquet and the creation of Vaux-le-Vicomte, via technology that allows the creation of an entirely natural world of sound, where sound exists in three dimensions. Thanks to this experience, a visitor will also hear the sounds around the figures: the whispers of guests, the rustling of clothing, dishes rattling, doors slamming...

To make **total immersion in this "sound cinema"** possible, HF beacons will be situated around the château, communicating with visitor headphones: scenes will automatically begin to play out all along the length of the visit, and visitors will thus find themselves immersed continuously in the Grand Siècle for an hour.

The visit will be proposed without extra charge to all visitors (above 6).

2 experiences (adult and young) will be displayed freely to visitors thanks to FOCAL headphones, in 3 languages (French, English, German)



2020 Events

Grand Siècle Easter

Saturday 11, Sunday 12 and Monday 13, April 2020

THE GREATEST EGG HUNT IN FRANCE!

A **giant scavenger hunt** will allow visitors to follow the traces of **famous figures from the Grand Siècle**. Decorations, face-painting, pony rides, activities and egg hunts for all ages (children, adolescents, adults) will contribute to the convivial atmosphere of this family day.

Full price: 17.90€ / Reduced price: 15.90€ / Free under 6



Candlelit evenings

Every Saturday from May 2 to October 3, 2020

Every Saturday night from May to October, Vaux-le-Vicomte offers its visitors an opportunity to rediscover this 17th century masterpiece in the **flickering light** of the two thousand candles illuminating the chateau and its jardin à la française. A romantic refined dinner, champagne bar and macaroons will complete this delightful, timeless evening (extra charge).

A **marvelous fireworks display** ends each of these magical evenings, to the captivating sound of waltzes...

Full price: 19.90€ / Reduced price: 17.90€ / Free under 6



Easter holidays

April 4 to 19

Visitors are invited to enjoy the Easter festivities at the chateau for two weeks! Spring decorations, **free face-painting** and a Grand Siècle **scavenger hunt** over the whole estate will be available, to the delight of young and old during the Easter school vacation (Zone C), along with **a gift for every child!**

Full price: 16.90€ / Reduced price: 14.90€ / Free under 6



Grand Siècle day

Sunday, June 7, 2020

Spend a day costumed in the fashions of the Grand Siècle, where Baroque and popular dances mix with skits performed by musketeers and carriage rides, for a unique experience in the art of living à la française at the time of Louis XIV and Nicolas Fouquet! The chateau invites costumed persons to compose real *tableaux vivants*, while the contest of most lavish picnic will reward most beautiful displays of the *art de la table*.

Visitors are invited to vote for their favourite costumes, unveiled before everyone during the traditional parade!

Full price: 17.90€ / Reduced price: 15.90€ / Free under 6
Preferential rates for costumed persons

The Styx, River of the Underworld

From April 4 to November 1: every weekend and bank holiday + French C zone holidays (except Summer holidays)

Presenting an **exceptional adventure on the underground river** which was diverted by Le Nôtre in 1654 during the creation of the French gardens, this specially designed trip is fun and interactive, and draws on La Fontaine's text "The Love of Cupid and Psyche".

Equipped with headlamps and thigh boots, you will be guided along the Styx, river of the classical underworld, participating in a series of agility and logic tests. An unprecedented and intense adventure brought to life by professional actors!

Price per session: 65€ (for 2 to 6 persons). Duration : 1h



Vaux-le-Vicomte celebrates Christmas

November 22, 2020, to January 3, 2021

For the 15th year, the Vaux-le-Vicomte estate will transform itself for the Christmas period into **an enchanted palace**. Visitors will be invited to discover a colorful Christmas through the magical illumination of the gardens and the chateau, and the **marvelous decorations and surprises** in reception rooms fragrant with cinnamon and gingerbread. Fires in the hearths and carriage rides will complete this magic moment independent of time and space.

ONLINE BOOKING REQUIRED

Full price: 19.90€ / Reduced price: 17.90€ / Free under 6



Restoration of the Grand Salon and projection of Le Brun's original ceiling design

The very nerve-center of the building, the Grand Salon is a complex space, at once innovative and unfinished, forming the central pivot from which all of the décor of the château radiates.

In 1660, the painter-decorator Charles Le Brun, having created the majestic decoration of the Grand Salon, planned on ornamenting this 400 m² cupola with an exceptional fresco. **All that was known at the time in architecture, sculpture, and painting, as well as astronomy and astrology, history and geography was combined with harmony and grandeur in the design.** Because of Nicolas Fouquet's arrest on 5 September 1661, the painter was not able to undertake his project. Very fortunately, several preparatory drawings—admired by Bernini for their virtuosity—exist in the collections of the Département des Arts Graphiques of the Musée du Louvre. The fresco, which would have been the largest ever done by Le Brun, was called "Le Palais du Soleil" by Mademoiselle de Scudéry in her novel *Clélie*.

The painting on the cupola ceiling at present is a work from late in the 19th century by **Charles Séchan**, executed to fill a space that had been bare from the beginning. **Today, the Grand Salon is awaiting a major overhaul: the ceiling and plaster terminal figures urgently need thorough work, an intervention that will begin in autumn 2020.**

Photo montage (photo credit Alejandro Fernandez - montage Agence RL&A. Architectes)



Restoration of the upper part of the Grand Salon

If the Grand Salon at Vaux-le-Vicomte is the most emblematic of the rooms of the château in terms of its architecture and decoration, it is also the **one that has suffered the most from the ravages of time**. A large portion of the cupola is damaged, fissures and cracks have appeared in numerous spots and the whole of the surface is terribly dirty. The elevations and plaster term figures also need cleaning. This restoration is absolutely necessary if the château is to recover its magnificent appearance, allowing the visitor to thoroughly appreciate the grandeur of the work by Nicolas Fouquet. The project, which will begin in 2020 is comprehensive. In addition to being restored, **the structure (the term figures, elevations, the cupola, etc.) will be minutely examined and researched**. The work of the participating curators and conservators will be to reveal the **secrets** still hidden in the Grand Salon. There are traces of paint still visible in spots, for instance, that suggest that the décor was originally polychrome, and that there was gilding around the windows of the first floor, as is the case in other rooms...

Palais du Soleil light show

To put the finishing touches to the restoration, **Charles Le Brun's sketches will be digitally scanned and projected on the cupola**. The engraving by Gérard Audran (1640-1703), in particular, shows the whole of the composition using these drawings. It is thanks to it that the reconstitution of the fresco on the cupola is possible with the help of the latest video mapping technologies. Projectors placed discreetly around the room will allow the drawing to be projected across the restored ceiling surface in the original sanguine color, and to bring it to life through an animated video. **In this way, the work as imagined by Le Brun will be revealed to the public eye for the first time in 2021.**

Sponsorship: 1 million sought

In order to finance this unprecedented project, the château is seeking another 250,000€ for material restoration and in 2020 will launch a campaign to raise funds amounting to 750,000€ for the digital recreation. This appeal for donations will be open to individuals as well as companies. Starting at 500€, generous donors will be able to "adopt" a person, a divinity or one of the signs of the zodiac, thus participating in a historic project! The invitation to participate is accessible to all: thanks to the international Friends of Vaux-le-Vicomte conservancy, everyone can support the château and claim tax-deductions (according to each country).

Key numbers

- 400 m²: total surface of the Grand Salon cupola
- The décor is composed of 16 term figures, depicting the 12 signs of the zodiac and the 4 seasons
- The Grand Salon forms a perfect oval, 13 x 18 m; at its highest point the cupola reaches 17.8 m

Budget

- 930 000 €: cost of restoration
- 750 000 € cost of the digital recreation of Charles Le Brun's design

Calendar

- Autumn 2020 - Spring 2021: restoration of the upper part of the Grand Salon (term figures, elevations and cupola)
- Spring 2021 - Summer 2021: installation of the light show project of the work originally planned by Charles Le Brun, the Palais du Soleil

Reinstallation Tritons water fountains

In 2019, the Château undertook the restoration of the Tritons basins and fountains. The groups of sculpture, representing Naiads and Tritons, will be put back in place in February 2020.

The two pools created by Le Nôtre disappeared in the 18th century, but were restituted in the late 19th century by the architect **Hyppolite Destailleurs** at the request of Alfred Sommier, with some differences: they were made larger and two sculptures of groups were placed at their centers, representing Tritons and Naiads blowing water from a shell. Designed in 1888 /1889, the fountains were done by the sculptor **Emile Peynot**. They are made of a layer of lead laid over a structure of puddle iron forming a stiff understructure, fixed on a masonry base. Leaks in their basins, problems with the functioning of the jets and the hydraulic system, disintegration of the bases and deterioration of the sculpture groups: the fountains were suffering from numerous ailments. Their restoration began in the spring of 2019, on-site (basins) and at the foundry (sculptures). The restoration, which cost **710,000 €**, was financed by Vaux-le-Vicomte, the Marina Kellen French Foundation, the DRAC, the Région Ile-de-France and the Département de Seine et Marne.

The two sculpture groups will be put back in place in February 2020. Each of them, of a total weight of 3 tons, necessitated 1,800 hours of work in the foundry, before being re-gilded. Their 40 m2 of surface is covered with 7,000 pieces of gold leaf.



Useful information

Prices

Full price entry: 16,90 € / Reduced price: 14,90 € / Free under 6.

For events tickets prices, consult our website.

An Annual Pass is available for unlimited access to the estate (including during events):

45 € for adults, 28 € for children!

Access

By train: train line P from Paris Gare de l'Est to Verneuil l'Etang then 'châteaubus' shuttle (59 minutes travel). *See timings at www.vaux-le-vicomte.com.*

By car: 50 minutes to the South of Paris.

By tour bus: Fontainebleau and Vaux-le-Vicomte in one day with pariscityvision.com.

Dates and times

Open every day from March 14 to November 1, 2020, then during the Christmas period.

Saturday Candlelit evenings from May 2 to October 3, until 11 PM

www.vaux-le-vicomte.com/en

*Water show take place on the second and last Saturday of each month, May to October
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