

Château d'Artigny – Loire Valley

History of Château d'Artigny

The second link in the chain of the Grandes Etapes Françaises

In 1959, René Traversac, the founder of the Grandes Etapes Françaises, owned just one establishment: the Prieuré close to Saumur. However, he had developed a liking for the hotel business and was looking for another establishment to acquire.

The Château d'Artigny, overlooking the valley of the Indre, had just been put on the market by Christiane Coty, the daughter of the famous perfumer who had built and owned the property. He was able to visit the majestic house and appreciate its beauty, but the size and magnificence of the château, not to mention the transformation work need to turn it into a hotel and decorate it somewhat dampened his enthusiasm. He gave himself a few weeks to think about it, at the end of which he finally took the risk of buying it.

A marvellous adventure then began, which was to lead him a few years later to become the head of the burgeoning chain of the "Châteaux-Hotels de France" : "Adapting a few of our old castles to suit modern tastes in comfort while respecting their historical character is the mission that the Association of Châteaux-Hotels de France has set itself".

In 1975, René Traversac played an active part in merging this chain with the "Relais de Campagne" chain and the "Relais et Châteaux" was born.

The Château d'Artigny, converted into a luxury hotel (thanks to the talent of the decorator, Pierre Scapula, and others), opened its doors on 27 March 1961.

Le Château d'Artigny down the centuries

The first château was built on the hill (the Puy) during the Hundred Years' War as part of the defences built along the Indre River around the keep at Montbazou.

As the centuries passed and following a series of restorations, it became a hybrid edifice, with neo-Gothic towers and pseudo Renaissance wings around the old manor house, which François Coty, the inventor of the modern perfume industry and its new owner, did not like. He demolished it in 1912, building in its place a sumptuous château in pure 18th century style, an almost perfect copy of the château de Champlâtreux in the Val d'Oise.

Coty, whose real name was Spoturno, was incredibly demanding; he wanted to rival the builders in the age of Louis XIV: the Perfume Emperor was going to compete with the Kings of France.

The chapel at the entrance to the château was to be an exact copy of the one in Versailles but a quarter of the size. The installations were grandiose: washbasins were in marble and the kitchen sinks in copper, the floors were in multicoloured marble, the woodwork was carved from the block and the capitals of the columns were decorated with ivy leaves, acanthus, laurel, etc. The kitchen was in white marble, the pastry room in pink and green marble and the linen room on two floors had 140 cupboards in citron wood or Macassar ebony inlaid with mother of pearl...

The work began in 1912 and finished in 1929. However, François Coty did not live there very long since he died in 1934.

On his death, the château was sequestered by his many creditors. During the Second World War, it was occupied in succession by the general staff of the Ministry of the Navy, German troops until 1942, and it was an annex of the Tours Hospital until 1946. Christiane Coty, the perfumer's daughter, inherited it in 1947.

L'hôtel in a few words

65 rooms and appartments
Television, minibar, lift
Meals served near the pool during summer
Inventive regional cuisine
Impressive collection of spirits

Marked trails in the 25 hectare park
Heated outdoor pool (01/04 through 31/10)
2 tennis courts
Pitch and Putt
Fishing on the banks of the Indre
Free bicycles available
Fitness with Turkish bath, sauna, jacuzzi, body building , exercise room
Helicopter and hot air balloon (with fee) : on-site departure available

Anecdotes

Last château built in XXe century

Francois Coty made built kitchen and cake shop in the attic to avoid odors (today transformed into rooms)

La « Rotonde » : elegant lounge situated on the first floor of Château d'Artigny, used for drinks receptions or wine tastings. It boasts a ceiling decorated with strikingly realistic trompe l'œil fresco/ Signed by the painter Charles Hoffbauer, it depicts 37 life-size figures from the Roaring Twenties taking part in a masked ball.

Reception lounge are very luxurious. Breakfast room is paved of marble and decorated with 104 squares of Carrara marble.

Château d'Artigny welcomed prestigious guests : Queen Mum in 1963 and Negus of Ethipia in 1972.