

Le Prieuré – Loire Valley

History of le Prieuré

By a pure stroke of luck, Le Prieuré became the first link in the chain of the Grandes Etapes Françaises. In 1954, René Traversac, an engineering graduate from the Arts et Métiers School, was actively occupied in running the Muray Company he had created a few years previously. Initially a photographer, he manufactured photo-cinema equipment: splicers, titlers, animated viewers, etc. in his workshops in the Rue de Belleville in Paris, which he despatched all over France and abroad.

Business flourished, he was tempted to buy a fine American car, an Oldsmobile, and it was the salesman who told him about a very pretty manor house for sale near Saumur.

Out of curiosity, he went to see it and was entranced by the "Hostellerie du Prieuré" which he initially took as a managed tenancy, buying it two years later, far from imagining that 9 other châteaux or fine houses would gradually joint it to form the Grandes Etapes Françaises.

A formidable hotel adventure was about to begin!

Le Prieuré down the centuries

Canehuta, the ancient name given to Chenehutte, was situated on the major Roman road from Angers to Poitiers. For this reason, in order to keep watch over the valley, the Gallo-Romans built an oppidum, a sort of retrenched camp housing 4,500 people, on this promontory.

Much later, in the 10th century, the Benedictine monks of Saint Florent le Vieil founded an establishment on the edge of this plateau dominating the Loire. However, Norman invasions caused the monks to flee and only the priors remained.

Our Priory, originally the house of the Prior, was built in the 12th century on two levels. (This is recalled in two rooms whose windows have original twin lobed semi-circular arches.)

In the 16th century at the instigation of Prior François Leroux de la Roche des Aubiers, the Priory was transformed in Renaissance style. The result was a magnificent double gabled manor house adorned with a hexagonal tower with a spiral staircase. The old private apartments of the Prior still have a huge fireplace richly decorated with symbols and ornaments.

In 1830, the Comte de l'Aubépin, the new owner of Le Prieuré, carried out work to give the house a square tower and thus the appearance of a château.

At the beginning of the 20th century, it was the turn of Comte Raymond de Castellane, a new owner from a noble Provençal family, to start restoration and embellishment work, in particular on the terraces.

L'hotel in a few words

21 rooms and flats « in the château » and 15 rooms in residences

Satellite television, minibar

Panoramic dining room

Regional cuisine that highlights local market garden produce and fish from the river

Loire valley wines : Saumur Champigny, Chinon, Coteaux du Layon

Anecdotes

First château-hotel created in France (1957)

Only château-hotel-restaurant in the area

Famous to have the most beautiful panoramic view over Loire Valley

Room 18 is supposed to be haunted since a customer said she saw a ghost in it. This anecdote inspired a group of french writers who wrote one entire book in a night on this subject !