

Restoration camp of the Castle "Cornes d'Urfé"



The Castle

Brief history:

The Urfé Castle, also called "Cornes d'Urfé" was built cause of rivalry of two big feudal landlords, who were in dispute of lands around Roanne in the 12th century.

In order to face the growing power of Lord de Forez and to limit his territorial claims, Lord de Beaujeu had installed a guard-post near Champoly in 1130. This post was built in front of Lord's fortifications in Saint-Jus-en-Chevalet, Cerviere, Crozet and Roanne.

In that period the Castle consisted of only one big tower ("Donjon" tower, i.e. the biggest tower in a castle) isolated on the altitude of 930 meters. One could have a sight on the entire region from this place.

The importance of this strategic position was to be preserved by Arnold Raybe d'Urfé. Thus the Urfé family could keep balance between the two masters and took a big advantage from it till 1234, when Lord de Forez took over it.

In 1408 Guichard d'Urfe, minister of Quercy, chamberlain of Duke of Orleans, built the Castle the way we see it today. This castle immortalized the name of the Urfé family.

The Castle was not much used till 1450 (the Urfé family lived in another castle, called Bastille d'Urfé). But in 1590, the fortress was reconstructed following the Renaissance standards, by Anne d'Urfé, brother of the author of "L'Astree". Anne was the chief of the League, and after this retirement lived in the Castle till 1618.

The Bastille d'Urfé was last fortified in 1704. It was bought by Meaux family in 1781, though its' members did spend much time there.

The Castle was seized from the Meaux family during the French Revolution. It was abandoned and some of the stones were stolen for construction works of the houses around.

The Meaux family regained the possession of the Castle once the Revolution was over. Though the Castle was in a bad state already and resembled ruins.

In 1914, Baron Antoine de Meaux restored «donjon» (the biggest tower) and the terrace. But the degradation went on due to the weather conditions and vandalism. Finally, 26 July 1946 the sight became a scheduled monument.

The Association for the Renaissance of the Urfé Castle was founded in 1979 in order to restore and preserve the sight.

Nowadays:

Nowadays, the Urfé Castle is an important tourist sight of Champoly and the neighboring communes. It is cited in numerous guides and internet sites about the region.

The sight is freely accessible to all public all around the year. Every year a restoration camp is being organized, which allows to set up cultural manifestations (concerts, expositions, etc.) and guided visits.

The outskirts of the Castle were also developed: parking, tables for picnics, arboretum, which includes almost 130 species of trees and bushes. A scientific and a colloquial name of each species is marked on a tablet.

The Association for the Renaissance of the Urfé Castle

General presentation:

The Association was founded in December 1979.

The goals of the Association are the following:

- to preserve the parts constructed
- to develop the outskirts
- to promote the cultural value of the sight

The Association is a part of REMPART federation, which unites 170 associations taking care of cultural inheritance preservation.

The Association finance:

For the most part, the Association is financed by public funds' contributions (Conseil départemental, Champoly budget fund, syndicate of the region). There are also donations and membership fees.

Volunteers and the Association:

Following REMPART rules, all volunteers become automatically members of the association they are working for. Thus, every participant of the restoration camp of the Castle becomes a member of the Association for the Renaissance of the Urfé Castle for one year. So you will be informed by a letter of the decisions and actions taken during the meetings.

Besides, members of the board are reelected every year, and as soon as you are informed on the date of elections, you have a right to vote.

Membership fees are included in to the total fees for the participation, thus 104 euros/for one session.

Restoration camp

This session, the restoration works are to be done on the walls around the Square Tower, i.e. Tour Carrée.

Volunteers will also participate in the organization of the annual night concert.

Sightseeing and entertainments:

In addition to visits organized every year, your free time can be spent in different ways. Here are several examples:

- Visiting the region (walking-tours, visiting on a town...)
- Visiting of monuments and sights (civil, military, and religious architecture of Middle Age and Renaissance)
- Museums (paper production museum, knife museum of Thiers)
- Swimming in lakes
- Barbecues in the castle
- Participating in holidays, concerts, other actions (for e.g.: nocturnal market in Noiretable, fairs, etc.)

Work timetable:

The working schedule is flexible and can be modified by the group of volunteers in consent with instructors. In general, a group works around 30 hours a week, but all depends on the weather conditions, etc.

Supervision/ Guiding:

Your work in the Castle is guided by a technical instructor. All that is connected to your every day life in the dormitory (provision, etc.) is managed by a manageress, Antonia LODICO.

Some assistance:

The restoration camp is open to everybody. It's not rare that friends, inhabitants of the commune, etc. come to render assistance and spend several days in the camp.

Living together

Cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, etc:

All those duties are done by volunteers in turn. Antonia LODICO will assist with shopping, some cooking, etc.

Rubbish sorting:

We sort our rubbish on four categories:

- non-recycled rubbish
- recycled rubbish
- glass
- special sorting, such as batteries, etc

Money box:

There is usually a money box during the restoration camp in case visitors would like to give some money for the volunteers.

This box is for WHOLE group and should be spend on a common action or a party, or something else (this money can not be just separated between camp participants).

HAVE A GOOD TIME!