

Glossary

Dining hall: in the late 18th century, a fashion which originated in England introduced this room and the relevant furnishings. Before 1750, a table was put up with boards on trestles in a gallery or any room in the château as it was needed.

Framed armchair: in the Regency period (1715-1723), the back and seat frames could be removed in order to change the padding and change winter furniture into summer furniture. Here, the winter padding is in place.

Rocaille: a decorative style in vogue during Louis XV's reign, with compositions made up of spiral patterns reminiscent of shells and shapes from the mineral or plant worlds.

Stamp: manufacturers' mark, obligatory since 1637, stamped by master joiners, usually appearing on joins or the underside of their work.

Practical information

Average length of visit: 1 hour.

Guided tour.

Tours accessible to disabled visitors.

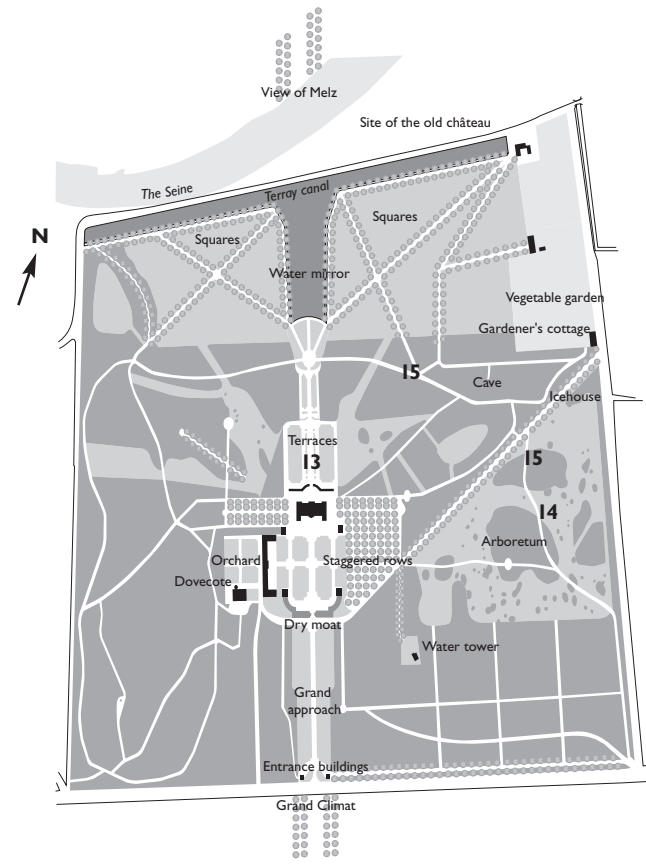


The Centre des monuments nationaux publishes a collection of guidebooks about French monuments translated into several languages. *Éditions du Patrimoine* publications are on sale in the bookshop-giftshop.

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The gardens

The La Motte-Tilly estate illustrates the evolution of gardens in stately homes.

- 13 A formal garden** was designed in 1754 by architect François Nicolas Lancret, with large walkways and straight paths. Flowerbeds and decorative boxwood hedges were laid out in front of the northern facade of the château. However, the formal garden lasted only thirty or so years, because in the late 18th century

the fashion was for romantic landscaping with the appearance of “English-Chinese” gardens, with fewer lines, more curved flowerbeds, and a greater variety of viewpoints. Around 1787, the estate was redesigned according to this new taste: vast lawns with scattered copses of trees with irregular clearings and a gentle slope down to the lake to which two artificial islands were added.

At the end of the 19th century, more ordered gardens made a comeback. When Count de Rohan Chabot bought the property from his cousins in 1910, he decided to restore the estate to its original condition.

- 14 English landscaped parkland** surrounds a traditional garden based on Lancret's plan. The estate suffered enormous damage in the storm on December 26, 1999, in which 70% of the woodlands were destroyed. In order to arouse new interest, the estate is now being studied in order to make it just as attractive as it once was.
- 15 The linden tree trail around the world** is the first sign of this renewal, which also marks a return to the estate's origins, since it was named after this species of tree. The mention of Tillicum (from the Latin *tilia*, linden trees) goes right back to the 9th century. The collection is made up of 73 different varieties, with new ones added every year.

La Motte-Tilly Château

“A country house”

A family château

La Motte-Tilly Château was built from 1754 onwards in wooded parkland on the banks of the Seine to plans drawn by architect François Nicolas Lancret for the Terray brothers. The most famous of the brothers, Joseph-Marie



The château in 1774

Terray, Abbot of Molesmes, became Controller-General of Finances for King Louis XV in 1769.

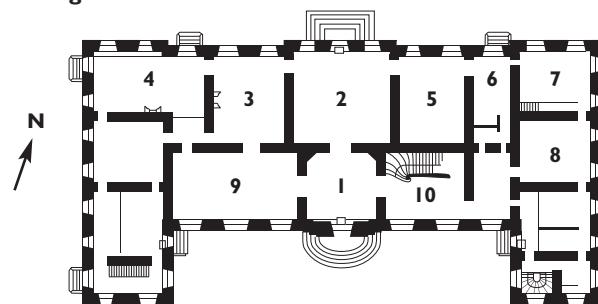
In 1910, Count Rohan-Chabot, a descendant of the Terray family on his mother's side, undertook restoration work based on archive documents. The park was redesigned with gently sloping terraces down to the water mirror. The château was listed as a historic monument in 1946.

After the count's death in 1964, his daughter, the Marquess of Maillé, reconstituted the refined atmosphere of an 18th-century home using decorations and furnishings with prestigious stamps*.

The Marquess died heirless in 1972, leaving her château to the National Historic Monuments and Sites Fund, now the Centre des Monuments Nationaux, on the condition that it be kept in good condition and “visitors should have the impression of somewhere that has been lived in”.

* Explanations overleaf.

ground floor



The château

The rooms in the château, which was designed as a summer home, are north-facing to make them cooler; the upper storey is given over to guest apartments.

- 1 The staircase hall** has a signed plan by the architect, Lancret, and two engravings by La Brunière showing that although the château has remained the same externally, the two commons buildings which held the theatre and kitchens were sadly destroyed in 1813.
- 2 The great hall** is the reception room, with the whole of the ground floor arranged around it: rows of rooms, direct access to the vestibule and views onto the French gardens. The hall contains very high-quality furniture, including five Louis XV framed armchairs* covered with green velvet and a rare piece of furniture: a marquise chair that folds out to make a bed.
- 3 The blue room**, with a Louis XV atmosphere, owes a large part of its charm to the rocaille* woodwork decorations on the walls. In this sophisticated setting, the refined furniture and decor give the room an Oriental atmosphere.

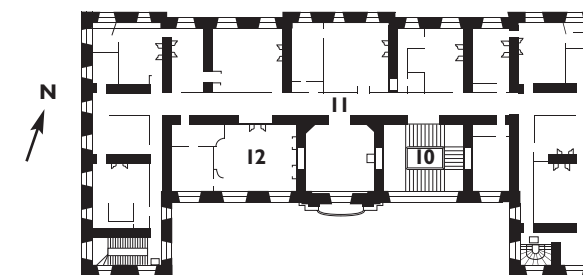
4 The library was the essential room in the Enlightenment period, due to the owner's desire to show off his encyclopaedic culture. All the main publications of the 18th century are on show in the bookcases.

5 The billiard room has a very fine marquetry billiard table made in 1839 by Descayrac in Paris. The items that remain from the cabinet of curiosities are now all in this room. There is a marble composition representing Saint Jerome in the desert, made in Florence in the 17th century, a piece of 17th century Flemish canivet – paper lace – two reverse glass paintings and a very fine ancient Roman mosaic representing a satyr's head.

Beyond the reception rooms lie a series of small, low-ceilinged apartments, reserved for private family life.

- 6 In the boudoir** there is a curious narrow piece of furniture for storing gloves.
- 7 On the Marquise de Maillé's desk**, next to her photo taken in 1971 on the château steps, there are other family photos recalling the sad events which marked her life: her husband Jacquelin de Maillé, who died at war in 1918; her only brother, Gilbert, killed just a few days before her husband; her only daughter, Claire-Clémence, who died in 1969.
- 8 The autumn room.** The *Virgin with Child* between the windows is an Italian "primitive" work from the 15th century: it is the oldest painting in the collection.
- 9 In the dining hall***, on the other side of the vestibule, a Vincennes porcelain dinner service is on display in the showcases. This was a wedding present in 1776, and the 170 pieces bear the Rouen-Sollé family monogram.

first floor



- 10 The grand staircase** leads up to the first floor, which was reserved for guests in the 18th century.
- 11 The gallery** now leads to ten or so apartments which, in addition to a bedroom, each have a boudoir and dressing room. These rooms have been equipped with all modern conveniences since 1964.
- 12 The walls of the Marquise de Maillé's bedroom** are decorated with mid-19th century, lightly coloured stiff percale, probably the oldest fabric in the château.

The cabinet of curiosities

Curiositas humana est**

Cabinets of curiosities appeared in the 16th and 17th centuries: enthusiasts collected extraordinary and unusual objects, whether man-made or the products of nature. In the 18th century, an intellectually fertile period, the *Encyclopaedia* defined a curious individual as "someone who collects paintings, art prints, marbles, bronzes, medals, etc. A taste for such things is called curiosity." During the Enlightenment, many collections were begun, whose exceptional items were to form the basis for many museums in the following century. In the mid-18th century, there were no less than 723 private collections in Paris.

The Morel-Vindé collection

Viscount Charles Gilbert de Morel-Vindé, grandson of the great collector, Gilbert Paignon Dijonval (1708-1792), inherited the latter's 4 000 drawings and 11 000 engravings. As he was forced to move and did not have enough space for his paintings, he was obliged to sell them. "I wanted to keep just some of the curiosities that I had with my paintings, consisting of a full collection of all the painting methods which have ever been invented anywhere in the world. I have put these interesting remains from my old gallery in my library..." Today, some of "these interesting remains" are kept in La Motte-Tilly Château, bequeathed by Viscount de Morel-Vindé to his grandson, Charles Louis Terray.

* Explanations overleaf.

** Curiosity is human.