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LMQ NEWSLETTER

Showcasing : Mayenne

Mayenne is a small town on the Mayenne river in the north of the Mayenne department. It is about a 20 minute drive from LMQ. Apparently, this is the only town in France which has the same name as the river and the department.

The town is known for its castle and riverside walks, and the surrounding area for its cider, its dialect (the French language spoken here causes purists to turn pale!) and its British population.

The town of Mayenne has two distinct parts. To the west of the Mayenne river, the Notre-Dame area is named after the impressive basilica, and to the east of the river the Saint-Martin area is named after the church. The area of Saint-Martin is popular with locals and tourist alike, on this side of the river there's hardly an empty shop to be found; there's an abundance of restaurants, cafes, retail outlets

and places to visit. St-Martin suffered from heavy bombing at the end of the German occupation during World War 2 and, consequently, the buildings in this area have slightly less character than those on the opposite bank.

The castle is Mayenne's main must-see attraction, after extensive renovations took place and an improved museum opened. The castle ramparts are also perhaps the best place for a birds-eye view across the Mayenne rooftops.

The castle is of 10th century origins and has largely retained its medieval appearance despite many transformations and renovations until the 19th century, including the construction of a theatre in the courtyard. Excavations in the castle have revealed walls and doorways from an even earlier castle, from the Carolingian period (8-9th centuries) which you can see when you visit.

The museum is excellent, a modern-style attraction which fits perfectly within the medieval castle. The majority of the information is translated into English, and the lifts make the whole building accessible for those with reduced mobility. A visit can be thoroughly recommended and you should allow at least an hour to have a good look. Even if you can manage the stairs, don't miss a trip in the lift with its panoramic view of the river.

Saint Valentine's Day

Well, I never knew...

It was the feast of Lupercalia, celebrated by the Romans on the days February 13-15 that gave us the first festival of valentines. Men would sacrifice a goat and a dog then whip women with the hides of the animals they had slain. These Roman 'romantics' were drunk and naked. The women would line up for the men to hit them, believing it would make them fertile.

This feast included a matchmaking ritual in which young men would draw the name of a woman from a jar then the couple would be matched for the duration of the festival (or longer if both parties were particularly enamoured...)

In the 5th century, Pope Gelasius I is credited with combining the martyrdom of two Saint Valentines - in the 3rd century Emperor Claudius II is said to have had executed two men, both named Valentine, on February 14 with the Catholic Church honouring them with a celebration of 'Saint Valentine's' Day - with the feast of Lupercalia to expel the pagan rituals. However, the festival was still a drunken revelry, but with clothes on, celebrating fertility and love... not unlike the present day 🙄

Le Carnaval de Granville

On Friday 21-Tuesday 25 February why not visit the famous carnival in Granville, one of the oldest in France, celebrating its 146th year. Plenty to see and do; a musical procession on Saturday, a brass band concert, children's cavalcade and more. Get details and info at <https://www.carnaval-de-granville.fr/en/>

Charbonnay anyone?

Pas-de-Calais is boasting a new white wine grown from chardonnay grapes apparently tasting highly perfumed and buttery. 'Charbonnay' has been grown on the side of a coal mine slag heap in the north of France and is available for a tongue tingling price of 50-60€ per bottle, hic