



<http://www.paysdemayenne-tourisme.fr/voir/html/patrimoine.htm>

The town of Mayenne is peopled by a little over 13,000 inhabitants.

Its center (within walking distance of the chateau) is lively and has shops and restaurants. There are twice weekly markets on Monday and Saturday and open air concerts in the summer. Some restaurants are worth a special mention, but they are not located right in the center of town. The Mayenne tourist office organizes a town tour daily in July and August covering the main sights.

The imposing chateau is, of course, the centerpiece. Dominating the river « Mayenne » from which the town takes its name, it was long considered as yet another medieval fortress, examples of which abound.

However, in 1996, the “Oxford archeological unit” started digging and discovered that the site had actually been occupied much earlier than anyone thought. Traces of the first stone building have been dated back to the 9th or 10th century, closer to Charlemagne than to the Middle Ages, when the river “Mayenne” marked an uneasy frontier between the Carolingian empire and the “Bretons” who controlled the West of France.

During two years, the Chateau was closed for a first program of research, but then another two years were necessary. Finally, after a long period of suspense, a brand new museum opened in 2008... and it was worth waiting for!

The museum uses sound and light to illustrate the genesis and development of the castle through the centuries. Particularly inventive are the outlines cast by projectors on the walls to show successive changes to the buildings.

The lights are accompanied in the main rooms by audio commentaries in English and in French – look for the buttons to press as you go into each room. There are also interactive computer screens which children find particularly appealing, and information panels in both English and French.

Many rare treasures were unearthed including tens of thousands of ancient coins and some unique backgammon and chess pieces, now displayed in the museum.



<http://museeduchateaudemayenne.fr/index.php>

The visit of the chateau can be combined with exploring the village of Fontaine-Daniel (a 10-minute drive south-West of Mayenne). Click on “K” on the map. You could also try a cruise on the river and discover the countryside leisurely and from a different vantage point. Going through the locks is fun !

Be sure to check on dates and times, and call for a reservation.

<http://www.paysdemayenne-tourisme.fr/faire/html/bateau.html>