

# CHATEAU DE LA ROCHEPOT

BURGUNDY ♦ BOURGOGNE ♦ FRANCE

## Prehistory

The first mention of the site of the Château de La Rochepot can be traced to 1128 A.D. and consists of a deed referring to its "newly constructed" [chapel](#). However, flint implements discovered on the surrounding grounds indicated that this rocky site was inhabited during prehistoric times. The former presence of Gallo-Roman defences are also very likely.

Why has this steep crag been the location of all these successive structures? The answer could be in its strategic position, which guards the ancient route linking the North and the South of France. Once a prehistoric trail, during the Middle Ages it became the trade route over which pewter ware was transported.



The Château de La Rochepot was first built around 1180 by **Alexander of Burgundy**.

Destroyed by fire during the 13th century, the castle lords, including Louis of Savoy, decided to build a new castle. The old chapel, located on the rocky promontory overlooking the village, had survived the fire. The lords selected this as the new building site and chose to incorporate the chapel into the castle's construction plans. An extremely deep [well](#), dug in the center of the courtyard, insured access to life essential element: water.

## The Age of the Golden Fleece

The Château de La Rochepot owes both its name and its entire architecture to two lords: **Régnier Pot** and his grandson **Philippe Pot**, two powerful vassals of the Dukes of Burgundy and Knights of the Golden Fleece.

In 1403, **Régnier Pot**, chamberlain to the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, bought the castle, then called La Roche Nolay. This valiant knight, on his return from the Holy Land, wished to make it his home. To this end, he undertook to enlarge the castle and to make it more liveable by adding new fortifications and towers. But it was Philippe who was to make the Pot family name even more renowned.



Born within the castle's walls **Philippe Pot** was said to be "the most accomplished knight of his time. " A private adviser to the Dukes of Burgundy, Philip the Good and Charles the Fearless, he became their head chamberlain and ambassador to London. When Burgundy was finally annexed to the French crown in 1477, Philippe Pot rallied to the French kings Louis XI and Charles VII. He became the Grand Seneschal of Burgundy and was entrusted with the role of representing the king in his own province. Involved in all major political matters of his time, he distinguished himself as a skilled diplomat, a fine negotiator, and a brilliant speaker.

The castle of Châteauneuf-en-Auxois was another of his possessions in the region, and he carried out the construction and enlargement of both fortresses at the same time. Upon his death in 1493, his sculpted tomb was already made: today this remarkable work of art is on display at the Louvre.

The Pot family transformed this rocky peak into an impregnable fortress which would valiantly resist the assaults of time.

## Changing Hands

During the 16th century, some famous personalities assumed lordship over the castle.

Among them was **Anne de Montmorency**. He was appointed marshal of France and, under the French kings Louis XII, François I, Henri II and François II, he served as high constable. Military chief and diplomat, senior minister and art lover, he owned more than 130 castles. In the 17th century, the **Cardinal de Retz** inherited the Château de La Rochepot; however his debts forced him to sell it. For the next 145 years, through inheritances and acquisitions, the castle became the property of two Burgundian families.



In 1789 came the French Revolution and the Château de La Rochepot was renamed Château de la Roche Fidèle (the Castle of the Faithful Rock). It was declared a national property, then was acquired by contractors who tore down part of its buildings, beginning with the [keep](#), which was sold stone by stone. Subsequently, it passed from hand to hand. As was the case with many monuments during this period, this edifice and its past could have sunk into oblivion.

But this was not its fate.

## Rebirth

In 1893, Madame Carnot, the wife of Sadi Carnot, President of France, purchased the ruins and offered them as a gift to her eldest son, Colonel **Sadi Carnot**. He decided to give a second life to the castle and to restore it according to its original 15th century style.



**I**t took more than 25 years for this ambitious task to be realized.

**T**his restoration, based on a trove of archives, archeological excavations and a skilled team of craftsmen, was aimed at full historical authenticity.

**T**he new owner, Colonel Sadi Carnot, surrounded himself with highly qualified specialists: **Charles Suisse**, the chief architect of the Historical Monuments in Dijon and Xavier Sckanovski, a local sculptor, both of whom had already restored many structures in Burgundy. This building project gave work to a large number of the 600 inhabitants of the village of La Rochepot, many of whom had been unemployed since the devastation of the vineyards by phylloxera.

**T**he end result is a meticulously accurate restoration.

**A**mong the castles of France, the Château de La Rochepot, as it stands today, represents the most evocative example of a lordly fortress of the Middle Ages.

**B**y virtue of its unique and elegant character, tumultuous history and the stability it emanates at present, its image has come to symbolise the region of Burgundy throughout the world.

Taken from the English webpages of <http://www.larochepot.com>