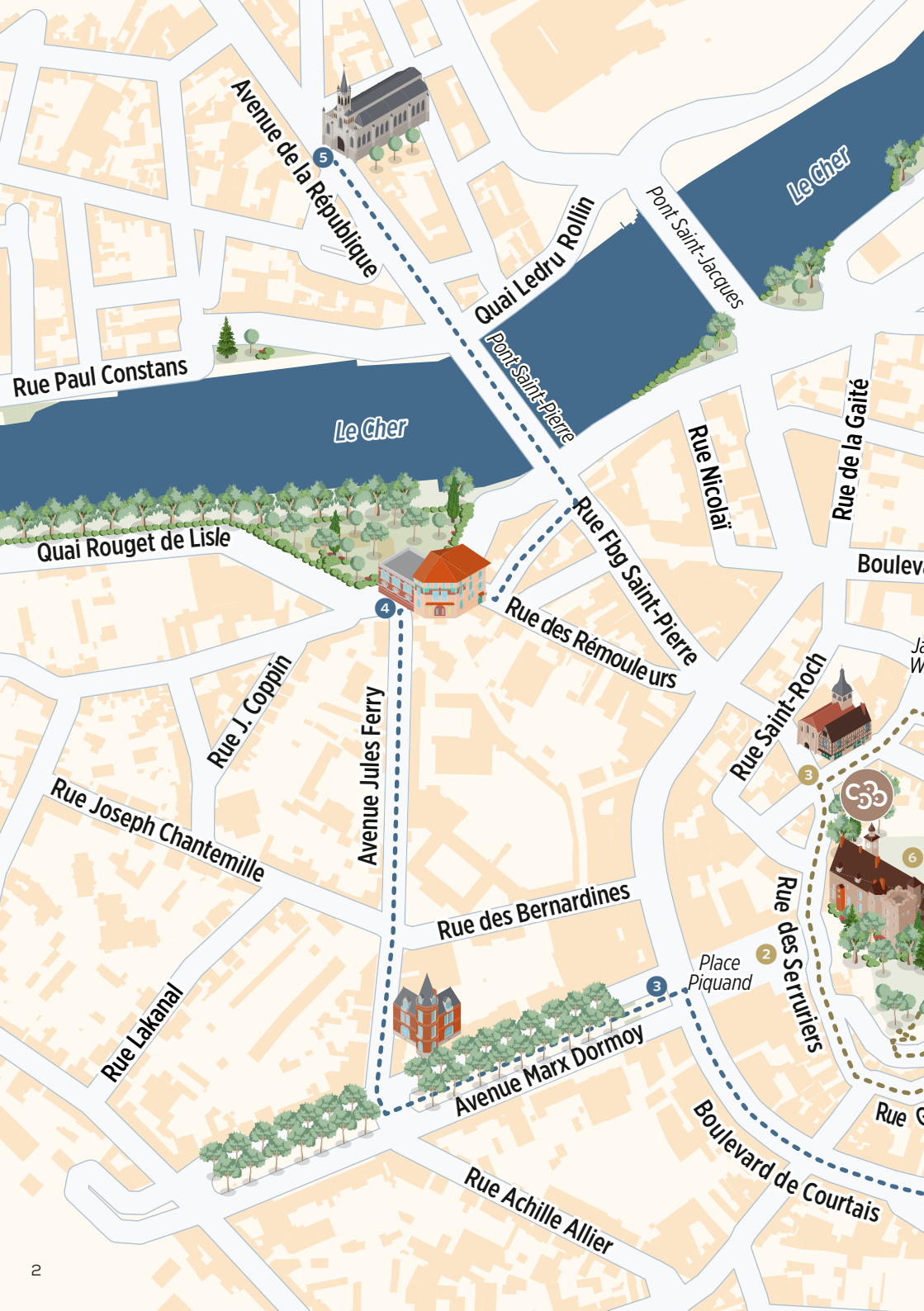




MONTLUÇON

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MONTLUÇON

Medieval city

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Medieval city

1 Medieval city buildings

Most of the timber-framed houses date from the 15th and 16th centuries. Supported by a stone-built loadbearing wall the upper floors are made of a wood frame infilled with daub. The ground floor often contained artisans shops. Rue Grande along with Rue des Serruriers and Rue de la Fontaine formed an elegant bourgeois thoroughfare in Montluçon.

Rue Grande

Admire the wonderful building facades at nos. 39, 56 and 64. The cross braces in the form of a "*Croix de Saint-André*" take their name from the terrible torture meted out to Saint Andrew, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Rue Porte Bretonnie

The fortifications had four gates: Saint-Pierre, des Cordeliers (or du Marché), des Forges and Bretonnie. The English (the Bretons) had settled in this neighbourhood for 17 years before being driven out by Philip Augustus in 1188; hence the origin of this street's name.



② Château des ducs de Bourbon

The present castle stands on the site of an earlier fortress dating back to the thirteenth century. It owes much of its current appearance to the reconstruction undertaken by Duke Louis II of Bourbon, who died in Montluçon on 19 August 1410. His successors continued the work throughout the fifteenth century, when an Italian-style gallery and a clock were added to the structure. The rectangular residential wing, adorned with mullioned and transomed windows, is flanked to the south-west by an imposing square keep crowned with a crenellated parapet. Enclosed within fortifications reinforced by ten towers, the castle overlooks the town, which during the Middle Ages was protected by a defensive wall punctuated by forty-one towers and pierced by four gates.

Following the incorporation of the Duchy into the Kingdom of France, the castle gradually fell into neglect. It was plundered during the French Revolution and, having fallen into ruin, was subsequently converted into military barracks before undergoing its first restoration in 1935.

Following recent restoration works, the "*Château des Ducs de Bourbon*" now houses a museum, accessible at point 6.



3 Saint-Pierre district

House of the Twelve Apostles

(To the right of Saint-Pierre church)

This is one of the most beautiful houses in Saint-Pierre district. At one time, the first-floor timber frames bore carvings of the twelve apostles. Sadly, these were all destroyed during the Revolution, but you can still make out where they used to be.

La fontaine aux lions

(To the left of the church)

In earlier days a fountain-grotto, you can still see a sandstone arch, a relic of the original 12th century building. The fountain was modified in the 19th century using Volvic lava stone. Two cast iron lion's heads were added as adornments for the new wall. In former times, the water in the fountain was thought to have healing powers. It may be the origin of the popular saying: "*Nez des lions tu mouilleras, bonheur, toute l'année, tu auras*". (Wet the lion's noses, and you will have happiness all year round).

Don't miss

The building opposite to the House of the Twelve Apostles is doubled corbelled; in other words, it has a space-saving, overhanging upper storey that had the added advantage of minimising the tax bill calculation which was based on a building's footprint.



Don't miss

One of the walls has a snake carved into it, to the left of the first window in the Rue des Cinq Piliers.



Saint-Pierre church

12th century church - listed as a Historic Monument since 1978

The church is a mixture of styles typical of the Auvergne and Berry regions, especially evident in the shortened transept crossing with its characteristic "*passages berrichons*". In the transept, to the right of the choir stalls you can see three remarkable statues, listed historical monuments, that date back to the "*Bourbonnais Golden Age*" (spanning the years between 1475 and 1525).

Second church door

(Rue des Cinq Piliers)

15th century door in the flamboyant Gothic style, its ogee topped by ornately carved pinnacles.





④ Around the Wilson garden

Porte Fouquet

(the tower is at the very end of n° 8, Rue Porte Fouquet)

During the 17th century, Louis XIV had Nicolas Fouquet, his Superintendent of Finances, imprisoned here. Fouquet's wife and three children were exiled to Montluçon where they were housed in the Château de la Gaîté, outside the city walls. To make it easier to get to Saint-Pierre church, Madame Fouquet had the former Porte de Cohelene reopened, hence the name Porte Fouquet.



Wilson garden

This French-style garden, also known as the Jardin des Remparts, was created in 1937 in the gardens of neighbouring private mansions and officially inaugurated by Marx Dormoy in 1939. Most of the original fortifications were destroyed in the 18th century leaving only a portion of the curtain wall as a reminder of the former medieval ramparts. Take the time to wander round and discover every corner of this park, taking in the rose garden, the shady terraces and the colourful, flowerfilled paths in the parish priest's garden.

Hôtel de Charnisay

Overlooking the Jardin Wilson, this hotel dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries. Its last owner, Amable-Philippe Artuys, Baron de Charnisay, ceded ownership to the city in 1919. The building now houses the MuPop, Music Museum.



Bust of André Messager

(at the far end of the garden, facing the pond)

Born in Montluçon on 30 December 1853, Messager was one of greatest composers of classical French operetta. He was also a significant contributor to the history of music in general, modernising the operetta style and opening it up to new influences.

5 Place de la Fontaine

Hôtel Alexandre de Beausson

8 rue de la Fontaine

The Alexandre family goes back several generations and has owned this hotel since 1575. Note the stone gate topped by an arched pediment, added during renovation works in the 17th century. The wooden door has a carving of a pelican feeding its young with her own entrails. Legend has it that this carving was commissioned by a local Freemason who was a knight of the Rose-Croix. The pelican, symbolising Christ giving his blood to save the human race, adorns the collarette worn by a knight of the Rose-Croix.

Rue de la Fontaine

This fountain has been supplying the city with drinking water for centuries. The water is channelled from the Conches spring by concrete pipes, enamelled on the inside, that date back to GalloRoman times. The public standpipes added in the 19th century have since been removed, restoring the fountain to its original 15th century style with an octagonal basin.



Lintel

5 rue de la Fontaine

Framing the Cross of Jerusalem, witness to the pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, is a verse from Psalm 71 of the Bible, the elderly man's plea: "In you, LORD, I have taken refuge ; let me never be put to shame".



6 "Château des Ducs de Bourbon" Museum and its esplanade – Listed as a Historic Monument since 1926

A true emblem of Montluçon, the castle has been entirely restored and now accommodates a museum devoted to the town's history, tracing its development through geology, the medieval period, and the rise of its industrial heritage. The ground floor hosts regularly renewed temporary exhibitions of national significance. Descend the Lion Staircase, turn left, and then continue uphill along Rue Grande.



7 Notre-Dame church

M.H. Listed monument.

Building work on this church spanned the period from the late 14th to late 15th centuries on the site of a former Romanesque church of which you can still see part of the chevet. The canted jambs on its facade were designed so as not to hinder the ascent to the castle. The listed 16th century stained glass in the large Gothic windows has gradually been restored. 17th century restoration works mainly focused on the two doors.

Retable de la Vierge

Listed 17th century, carved gilded wood

The scene shows the Assumption and is flanked by four fluted columns topped by Corinthian capitals. The statue shows the Virgin Mary, seated, presenting the Christ Child who is holding a pear. The statue was consecrated in 1656. "Our Lady of Montluçon" is celebrated each year on 8 September for her benevolence and blessing.



Don't miss

Each colonnade is resting on a small figure representing a musician.

8 Passage du Doyenné

Taking its name from the Dean of the Chapter of Saint-Nicolas, this magnificent vaulted passage has large intersecting ribs, the lower ends of which rest on sculpted corbels. At the time, there were two churches, one on either side of the passage : Saint-Louis chapel on the left, with the remains of its buttress walls, and Saint-Nicolas church, nearly opposite Saint-Louis. Saint Nicolas was destroyed after the Revolution.

The Dean's window

French Supplementary Historic Monument List 1926

If you look up to your right, you can see an arched 13th century window with three tores supported by three colonnades topped by ornate capitals.



9 MuPop, Music Museum

In the heart of the Medieval city, in an innovative 3,300 m² museum, discover the largest collection of musical instruments in France against the backdrop of an entertaining and interactive light show. Put your earphones on and let yourself be transported through a musical universe from jazz to rock, passing through French musette, pop music, and many more. Share unique sound experiences with family or friends !

19th century

① Around the Hôtel de Ville

Gabrielle Robinne Theatre

Built on the site of the former Ursulines chapel, the theatre was completed in 1913 and inaugurated on 17 January 1914. The “Louis XVI-1900” style facade has three arched windows opening onto a balcony that forms a balustrade. The windows are topped with ornate carvings. Montluçon native Gabrielle Robinne was the most famous actress of the early 20th century, and had her photo taken 817 times ! The theatre was named after her in 2006.

Hôtel de Ville

From 1792 until 1909, meetings of the municipal council were held in the former Ursuline convent. In 1909, however, the ageing convent was demolished to make way for the present Town Hall, erected on its foundations and officially inaugurated on 15 December 1912. Major restoration works completed in 2025 revealed once again the magnificent stained-glass skylight and the 60-square-metre mural adorning the Congress Hall, both of which had been concealed during alterations carried out in the late 1960s.

Courthouse

(opposite the Hôtel de Ville)

In the early 19th century, the Montluçon law courts were located on the ground floor of the castle. The new courthouse, opposite the Hôtel de Ville was inaugurated in 1888.



Don't miss

(4 place Jean Jaurès)

Above the door is a high-relief carving of two lovers back-to-back, each playing a musical instrument. Take a look at the figure on the right ; he is playing the “cabrette”, a traditional local type of bagpipe.





2 Boulevard de Courtais

Formerly known as the Boulevard des Remparts, this is the city's main street. It takes its name from Général de Courtais, famous for his exploits when fighting for the Empire, born in Montluçon in 1790. The general died in 1877 without heirs, leading to part of his fortune going to his nephew the Vicomte de Paillhou, responsible for building the Aérium de la Charité. If you look up you can see the wonderful architectural details of the Boulevard de Courtais nowadays a busy shopping street thronged by the local inhabitants.



Square de la Romagère

This Neo-Louis XIII-style residence (distinguished by its brick façade framed with white stone) was built by Hélion Vincent Louis, Count of La Romagère, a prominent nineteenth-century industrialist, before being sold in several separate lots.

The City of Montluçon has since transformed the grounds into a poetic public garden covering 500 square metres, offering visitors a tranquil and contemplative setting.

N° 68 Former Baroque style "Café Riche"

At the turn of the last century, this cafe was frequented by fashionable Montluçon society who came to dance and enjoy themselves.



MONTLUÇON 19th century



③ Avenue Marx Dormoy

On 7 August 1864, Napoleon III inaugurated the station and avenue that would bear his name until 1870. The avenue would be renamed no less than five times before becoming Avenue Marx Dormoy in 1944. A handsome thoroughfare in the Haussmannian style, 400 m in length and 40 m in width, the avenue is lined with beautiful 19th century mansions in a range of styles : Neo Louis XIII, neoclassical, and so on.

Marx Dormoy

Born in Montluçon in 1888, Marx Dormoy became Mayor in 1926. Appointed under-secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister under Léon Blum, he went on to become Minister of Internal Affairs and was involved in the 1936 "*Accords de Matignon*". He was assassinated in Montélimar, where he had been placed under house arrest, on 25 July 1941, (a bomb had been placed under his bed).

On the corner of avenue Marx Dormoy - N° 20 ter

Neo Louis XIII style decorated with red and black bricks forming diamond shapes. The date of construction can be seen on a heraldry shield adorning the large arched mullioned window, facing avenue Marx Dormoy : 1896.

④ Avenue Jules Ferry

Jules Ferry secondary school

The college stands on the site of the former Bernardine Convent which had been there since 1631. The convent was confiscated during the French Revolution, and demolished in 1881. In 1884, a new boys' high school was built here, now the site of the present-day secondary school.

Former public baths

(on the corner of Avenue Jules Ferry)
Built by the architect Pierre Diot in 1912,



who designed many of the buildings of this style in Montluçon. Notice the floral motifs imprinted into the tiles and the white wood balustrades, typical of this period. Most of the decors are in the Art Deco style, with brightly coloured, geometric patterns forming mosaicic shapes. The cartouches above the windows are richly decorated with sculpted foliage. The central facade shows the intertwined letters B and D.

5 Ville Gozet

Saint-Pierre bridge

First of the city's bridges, at the 15th century it was rebuilt in 1879 and widened in 1910. In the 19th century, the factories were nearly all located on the other side of the bridge, on the left bank of the river Cher. This district is known as the Ville Gozet, it had the city's largest population.

Saint-Paul church

M.H. 1985

Built in 1864 by the famous architect Louis Auguste Boileau. The cast iron support for the metal cupolas was cast in Montluçon's Hauts-Fourneaux blast furnaces. Saint-Paul church is one of the 3 churches in France supported by a cast iron architectural frame.

Municipal building

French Supplementary Historic Monument List 1999

The Municipality of Jean Dormoy decided on the building's construction in 1896. As with the church of Saint-Paul, the building is supported by a cast iron architectural frame. A genuine public building, it housed a community centre, labour offices and a library; its cost-efficient ovens allowed it to serve workers hot meals.



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