

# CHÂTEAU DES BAUX-DE-PROVENCE

PRESS KIT



## Press contact

Diane Soulié - 01 56 59 01 72  
[diane.soulie@culturespaces.com](mailto:diane.soulie@culturespaces.com)

 **culturespaces**  
PARTAGER LA CULTURE





**CONTENTS**

Culturespaces, representative for the Castle.....4

A great medieval.....5

A turbulent past.....9

Programmation 2023.....12

The action of Culturespaces at the Castle.....13

Practical information.....14

## CULTURESPACES, REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE CASTLE

With **thirty years of experience and four million visitors a year**, Culturespaces—founded in 1990 by Bruno Monnier—is the leading private operator in the management and promotion of monuments, museums, and art centres. Since 2012, Culturespaces has also become a pioneer in the creation of digital art centres and immersive digital exhibitions.

### **Sites promoted and managed by Culturespaces:**

- Château des Baux-de-Provence (since 1993)
- Musée Jacquemart-André in Paris (since 1996)
- Carrières des Lumières in Les Baux-de-Provence (since 2012)
- Hôtel de Caumont Art Centre in Aix-in-Provence (since 2015)
- Atelier des Lumières in Paris (since 2018)
- Bunker des Lumières in Jeju (since 2018)
- Bassins des Lumières in Bordeaux (since 2020)
- Infinity des Lumières in Dubai (since 2021)
- Fabrique des Lumières in Amsterdam (since 2022)
- Théâtre des Lumières in Seoul (since 2022)
- Hall des Lumières in New York (since 2022)
- Phoenix des Lumières in Dortmund (since January 2023)

Culturespaces oversees the promotion of the venues and collections, the reception of the general public, the management of staff and all the services, cultural animation, the holding of temporary exhibitions, and the sites' national and international communication.

Aware of the importance of preserving the national heritage for future generations, Culturespaces also contributes each year to funding restoration campaigns on the monuments and collections it manages.

Culturespaces ensures the highest standards for the reception of the general public and its venues are open seven days a week; it offers visitors free audio guides, applications, Wi-Fi, and activity books, as well as discounted admission prices for families, young persons, and the elderly.

[www.culturespaces.com](http://www.culturespaces.com)



## A GREAT MEDIEVAL SITE OF PROVENCE

A medieval fortified settlement, the citadel of Les Baux included the Château and its village. The tour takes us to unexpected places.

### AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE

"Bau", in Provencal, means «rocky escarpment». Perched on this rocky outcrop, the Château appears an eternal landmark. These stone ruins look out over a breathtaking view. At the very heart of the Alpilles, the Camargue and Provence stretch into the distance: to the east lies the Entreconque valley, to the west the Fontaine valley. At any time of year, the light dances playfully on this giant mass of rock and skips across the countryside creating a wonderful display of colour.



© Culturespaces / Virginie Ovesian

### THE TOUR DE BRAU

Formerly the Hotel de Glandevès, this listed building dates from the end of the 14th century. In the 15th century, as a gift from King René, it became the property of the powerful Tour de Brau family (lou brau meaning «the wild bulls»). Inside, visitors can see the superbly furnished low room. The vault ribs are decorated, at the keystones, with coats of arms bearing the famous sixteen-pointed star of the Les Baux family. Two models show how the Château would have looked in the 13th century and in the Renaissance. The Tour de Brau house contains a medieval shop.

### THE CHAPEL OF SAINT-BLAISE AND THE CEMETERY

The Chapel of Saint Blaise, close to the Tour de Brau House, was built in the 12th century by the guild of wool carders and cloth weavers. Today, the Chapel is the setting for a new film : "An aerial view of Provence". Opposite the Chapel, the cemetery overlooks the Val d'Enfer [Hell Valley] with ruins of old quarries where only the vast porticos remain and cast macabre and fantastical shadows. Steeped in charm and legends, this is the final resting place of the Provencal painter, Yves Bayer and the poet, André Suarès (1868-1948), a friend of André Gide, Paul Claudel and Charles Péguy.



© Culturespaces / C. Recourra

## QUIQUERAN HOSPITAL,

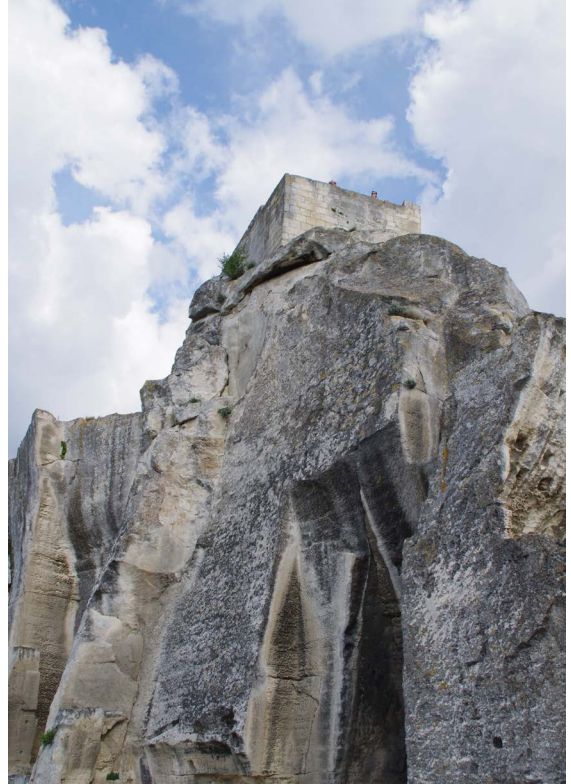
The Quiqueran Hospital was built between 1542 and 1583 under the patronage of Jeanne de Quiquéran, wife of Honoré des Martins, Governor of Les Baux. Later renamed «Hôtel Dieu et charité des Baux», it did not close until 1787.

## THE SARACEN TOWER

Located at the top of a rocky foothill, it blocks off the Château at the south and, together with the Bannes Tower, prevents access through the “de l'Auro” Gate, the North Wind Gate. It was intended to provide a warning of the return of the Saracens. These buildings are part of an ingenious system of defence designed to mislead intruders thinking they could penetrate the Château only to be repelled at the fortress walls. False gateways and the lie of the land were therefore used to deceive assailants.

## THE CHÂTEAU CHAPEL

The Château chapel is at the entrance to the Château. The chapel was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary but has been dedicated to Saint Catherine since the 16th century. Reworked, the chapel today has rib-vaulted bays with wall ribs, liernes and tiercerons but has still preserved its Roman structures which are the oldest remains visible in the Château today.



© Culturespaces / C. Recourra



© Culturespaces / C. Recourra

© Culturespaces / C. Recourra







## THE CHÂTEAU

At the heart of the citadel lies the Château des Baux. Its keep constitutes the best example of this military architecture. Anchored in the rock since the 12th century, it seems to be the last bastion of this impregnable fortress. Decorative vestiges adorn the high walls: ornate sculpted friezes show Saint Michael slaying the dragon, a griffon, etc. At the base of the keep is a Gallo-Roman votive stele; the mysterious relief of the Trémaïé (or Three Marys), where the faithful believed they could see the effigies of the Virgin, Mary Jacobé and Mary Salomé.

## FORGOTTEN COLOUR

An inventory drawn up in 1426, after the death of Alix, the last Lord of Les Baux, gives a unique, precise description of the interior decoration of Château des Baux. The Château was magnificently decorated at the time. Each room had a name: the Rose Room, The Bishop of Tortose Room, etc. and tapestries hung on the stone walls with the coats of arms of Les Baux, Orange and Toulouse recounting the legends of Alexander and Olivier.





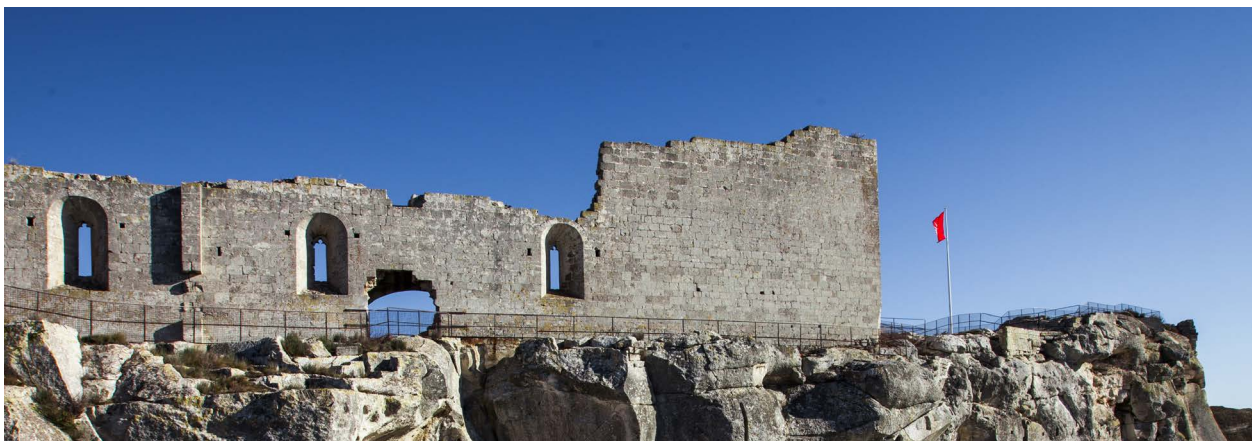
## A TURBULENT PAST

### A LEGENDARY NAME

In the 10th century, when the Christian order was imposed throughout the western world, Manassès, Archbishop of Arles, an intransigent and authoritarian prelate, surrounded himself with some clever and devoted men to establish his power. Amongst them was Isnard, to whom he gave the Baux valley as thanks for his loyalty. A castle was then built on the rocky escarpment. Little by little, these ambitious lords accumulated land and honours. They were formidable and obeyed only the law of excess.

In fact, the princes of Les Baux claimed to be the descendants of one of the three magi, Balthazar. In recognition of the star, which had guided them, the magi sanctified the star: Saint Estelle. This is why it features on the coat of arms of the lords of Les Baux, who took as their motto "Al Azar, Balthazar" (By chance, Balthazar).

*"The first by their ancient name and splendour – Of the Provencal families – Race of eaglets, never vassals – Which with the tips of their wings – Brush against all the high peaks."* This is how the legendary family of Les Baux are referred to at the start of the Calendal by the writer, Frédéric Mistral.



© Culturespaces / C. Recourra

### SOME ILLUSTRIOUS CHARACTERS

In the turbulent history of the seigneurie, some symbolic figures stand out:

**Raymond des Baux** waged the Baussenque wars for almost twenty years (from 1145 to 1162), fighting the Count of Barcelona for the earldom of Provence.

**Raymond de Turennes** was an obedient lord for a long time: He fought in Flanders for the King of France and in Italy for the Pope. But suddenly he revolted against the powers that be and became "the scourge of Provence", a cynical and cruel lord, defying the court of France and papal power. He was condemned to death and excommunicated. Making light of these sentences, this invincible brigand surrounded himself with pillagers attacking towns and villages spreading fire and death.

Finally, **Alix des Baux**, the last and only heir to the lands of Les Baux. On his death, in 1426, this turbulent line of the lords of Les Baux came to an end. The Château survived a few more years until its destruction in 1483.



## **REBELS BUT COURTIER**

In the 12th and 13th centuries in Provence, a new institution called chivalry was established. Knights, who were strong, took an oath to use their swords only to defend the weak. They swore to preach God's peace and to respect women, clerics and peasants. Great importance was now placed on culture provided by the troubadours who weaved their way across Provence.

The glory of Les Baux-de-Provence is associated with its poets, musicians and singers who introduced a little humanity in these times of war. The lords took part in this game and the poetic sparring. These rugged men of arms were happy to compose or listen to pastoral poetry, tenons (satirical couplets), ballads, sirventès, or songs. They would woo the beautiful ladies in the Courts of Love, a form of gallant entertainment where these ladies would pass judgement on matters of gallantry and disputes about love and would award prizes for Provençal poetry.

Time was divided in the 12th century between riding out to war and courtly festivals. The troubadours and their ladies created a new code of values which introduced a taste for song and dance into the courts of the Midi. The lady being courted was always a married woman. The secret between the two of them, shared by the messenger and the look-out, was the very basis of courtly love. However, there was also room for anxiety due to the slanderers - jealous, malicious people, ready to tell the husband about the poet and his lady.

In their poetic songs (la canso), troubadours, who were writers and performers, glorified fine love, for the lady, which was seen as a way of perfecting the soul and heart of the knight. They would sing for a long time about the young girls of the lords of Les Baux called Azalais, Douce, Fanette and Passerose, first names which are still found today in Provence.

## **DESTRUCTION**

Alix de Baux, the sole heir to the fiefdoms of Les Baux, left his lands to a distant relative, the Duke of Andria. However, following sieges and wars, the seigneurie fell to René d'Anjou. In 1481, on the death of "Good King René", the last count of Provence, les Baux became part of the Kingdom of France. Louis XI destroyed the citadel.

The seigneurie was then transformed into a barony and given, by way of reward, to the loyal servants of the Kings of France. The most famous of those being Constable Anne de Montmorency, a childhood friend of François I. He restored the ruined Château and introduced Italian Renaissance architecture to Provence. He resisted a dangerous invasion attempt by Charles-Quint and had the Treasury archives transferred to the citadel from Aix, where they were under threat from the Emperor's troops. However, the wars of religion soon posed a threat to this ephemeral peace and Les Baux, which had become a bastion of Protestantism under the Manville family, was then viewed with suspicion by the King's representatives.



## THE LASSITUDE OF RICHELIEU

Involved in a revolt led by Gaston d'Orléans against his brother, Louis XIII, the city of Les Baux again came under siege. Richelieu decided to annihilate this hotbed of revolt. He called the Baron of Les Baux, Antoine de Villeneuve, a favourite of Gaston d'Orléans, to court and, during his absence, gave the order to lay siege to the town. In spite of being heroically defended for 27 days, the gates finally opened and the ramparts were brought down. The high walls were destroyed by powder and pickaxe. The proud citadel of Les Baux finally submitted to the throne.

Established as a marquisate, the fiefdom of Les Baux was given to the Grimaldi princes by way of thanks for driving the Spanish from Monaco. France did not buy back the province until 1791.

## THE CALM BEFORE ANOTHER STORM

Suffering from the loss of its political and military status, the village of Les Baux saw its population diminish, and the deserted citadel became no more than a "dead city". Only the great Provençal poets, such as Frédéric Mistral and Alphonse Daudet, still defended these fascinating ruins.

It was not until 1821 that the citadel of Les Baux would emerge from oblivion. A scientific discovery attracted attention to this town, which had become a village: a chemist called Berthier found a red rock in the area, which could be used to produce aluminium. He called it "bauxite".

In 1945, the opening of the famous restaurant "L'Oustau de Baumanière" by Raymond Thuillier, Mayor of Les Baux from 1971 to 1993, attracted heads of state, artists and celebrities. Their arrival marked the rediscovery of Les Baux by the general public, aware of the unique character of the place.

Since 1992, Château des Baux has been a hive of activity with excavation and restoration programmes making it even more attractive.

In 1993, the District of Les Baux-de-Provence decided to call on Culturespaces to develop and manage Château des Baux.



© Culturespaces / S. Lloyd



## **2023 PROGRAMMATION**

### **NEW IN 2023: THE QUIQUERAN GARDEN**

From spring 2023, the entrance to the castle will be through the discovery of a medieval-inspired garden.

### **MONDRIAN EXHIBITION**

To echo the 2023 programme in Carrières des Lumières, the Château presents an open-air exhibition retracing the life and work of the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). From 14 April 2023, visitors will be able to wander freely through the gardens of Les-Baux-de-Provence and admire the emblematic works of this major 20th century artist in this unique setting.

### **OPEN-AIR ESCAPE GAME "LE MYSTÈRE D'ALIX, DERNIÈRE DAME DES BAUX"**

Explore the remains of the castle and discover the mysteries surrounding the will of the last princess of Les Baux by answering a series of riddles and challenges.

### **SUMMER**

Crossbow shooting, demonstrations of war machines and interventions by the fencing master during a lively journey to understand the rich history of this high place in Provence through many anecdotes .



## **THE ACTION OF CULTURESPACES AT THE CASTLE**

### **A FREE AUDIO GUIDE SERVICE AND AN APPLICATION**

Audioguides, which explain the history of the Château, are available in 10 languages (French, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese and Japanese).  
Creation of an iPhone/iPad and Android application

### **VISITS FOR CHILDREN**

Creation of educational workshops for schools : Introductory workshops to medieval art, based on the themes of water and the wind for kindergarten-level children, heraldry and coats of arms for primary school children, and architecture for secondary school students.  
Creation of a games book for children with two new mascots to children from 7 to 11 to discover the castle.

### **A RECEPTION SERVICE**

With its untamed beauty and magnificent views, Château des Baux-de-Provence offers an outstanding and unforgettable setting for weddings or private receptions up to 1000 guests.  
Contact : [groupees@chateau-baux-provence.com](mailto:groupees@chateau-baux-provence.com)

### **SPECIAL OFFERS FOR GROUPS**

Numerous programmes designed for groups are available: guided tours, tickets combined with other Culturespaces or regional sites to discover all the unmissable locations.  
Groups with a reservation also benefit from numerous advantages like free tickets for the driver and guide.



## THE CULTURESPACES FOUNDATION



### THE ACTION OF THE FOUNDATION CULTURESPACES AT THE CASTLE

In 2022, the Culturespaces Foundation is continuing its work at the Château des Baux de Provence to help children who are far from cultural opportunities by enabling them to discover their regional heritage through guided and thematic tours of the famous medieval monument. These visits are offered free of charge to children from 5 to 12 years old, from priority schools, social structures, but also to sick or disabled children and their families. With this action, the Fondation Culturespaces enables nearly 200 children and 50 indirect beneficiaries (teachers, educators, parents, etc.) to enjoy a unique experience every year.



© Culturespaces / Stéphanie Tetu

### ABOUT FONDATION CULTURESPACES:

In order to fight against inequalities in access to culture, the Fondation Culturespaces has been developing educational programs for children who are vulnerable due to illness, disability or social exclusion since 2009. By making them the actors of a tailor-made educational program, the Foundation accompanies them in the discovery of a universal historical and artistic heritage, to better help them build themselves through culture and integrate into society. Fun and interactive experiences are offered in a dozen exceptional cultural establishments, including the Atelier des Lumières (Paris), the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, the Hôtel de Caumont (Aix-en-Provence) and the Théâtre Antique d'Orange. By raising awareness of culture, art and heritage in an inclusive and engaging way, the Fondation Culturespaces combines solidarity with creativity. This singularity makes it a benchmark player in France in terms of cultural and artistic awareness for children in situations of exclusion. The Fondation Culturespaces is placed under the aegis of the Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion (FACE).

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### ADDRESS

Château des Baux-de-Provence  
13 520 Les Baux-de-Provence  
+33 4 90 54 37 37  
groupes@chateau-baux-provence.com  
www.chateau-baux-provence.com

### ACCESS

By car: Motorways A7 (Avignon exit), A9 (Nîmes) or A54 (Les Baux-de-Provence).  
By train: Avignon, Aix-en-Provence and Arles train stations  
By plane: Nîmes, Marseille, Avignon airports

### OPENINGS

Open all year long.  
January, February, November, December: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
March, October : 9.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
April, May, June, September: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.  
July, August : 9 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.

### RATES

**With special activities** (April to August): Full rate: 10 € / reduced rate: 8 €  
**Without special activities** (October to March): Full rate : 8 € / reduced rate : 6 €  
Reduced rate for children from 7 to 25, students, teachers and job-seekers.  
Free for children under 7 years old, journalists and disabled visitors

### Pass Provence (Château des Baux-de-Provence + Carrières de Lumières + musée Brayer) :

With activities : 20 € (FR) / 16 € (RR) | Without activities : 18 € (FT) / 14 € (RR)

**Family offer** (2 adults + 2 kids 7-25 years old): With activities : 59.50 € | Without activities : 51.50 €

### PRESS CONTACT

Diane Soulié  
01 56 59 92 57 - 06 33 99 74 75  
diane.soulie@culturespaces.com



**Château des Baux-de-Provence**  
13 520 Les Baux-de-Provence

Press contact  
Diane Soulié  
01 56 59 92 57 - 06 33 99 74 75  
[diane.soulie@culturespaces.com](mailto:diane.soulie@culturespaces.com)