

## Joseph Claussat

Mayor of Châteldon and Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Joseph Claussat defined himself as "the candidate of the poor". Born in 1874, the second child of a family of eight, he became a doctor like his father. He became interested in politics at a very early age. By the age of 20, he had already joined the Socialist Revolutionary Committee of Clermont-Ferrand. He was even noticed at public meetings where he enjoyed taking the floor. After graduating in 1899, he moved to Pont-du-Château and soon became a member of the town council. In 1907, he settled in Châteldon, on the occasion of a cantonal election which he won. However, Claussat was a troublemaker. He was an activist who intervened regularly and occasionally vehemently, leading to a 30-day suspension from his mandate as General Councillor of Châteldon for taking part in a meeting that was unfavourable to Georges Clemenceau, President of the Council. In 1908, he became Mayor of Châteldon, just a few years after his father. He was re-elected several times, occasionally with an overwhelming majority – 527 votes out of 550 voters in 1925 – and headed the municipality until his death. Elected a Deputy in 1911 to replace Noël Chamerlat, who had died, he became a member of the Commission de l'Agriculture before being mobilised as a chief medical officer during the Great War. In 1917, back in the Palais-Bourbon, he attacked Painlevé, Minister of War, questioning his competence. He was re-elected Deputy for Puy-de-Dôme three times. He died at the age of 51 during a hunting trip near Chartres, on 9th November 1925.



## The Marianne of Châteldon

Allegorical figure of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, Marianne has embodied the French Republic since the Revolution. Her face must therefore appear on all coins, stamps and administrative documents representing France. She is also present in every Town Hall in the guise of beautiful – and sometimes buxom – young women, with barely veiled breasts and a Phrygian cap on her head. Châteldon Town Hall possesses a majestic bust, almost one and a half metres in

height, which corresponds perfectly to these ideals. It has neither the features of Brigitte Bardot, who was used as a model to sculpt the bust of our national Marianne in 1970, nor those of a few other famous "people". It actually represents Thérèse Rongère, the wife of a "simple" country warden, whom the Mayor of Châteldon, Joseph Claussat, entrusted to the "good care" of the sculptor Paul Graf, in 1913. If you visit the Châteldon Town Hall, ask to see this unique Marianne.

## Le Sergent

...on n'est pas un remède universel  
...usage; et c'est surtout d'elle  
...elle flatte spécialement le goût



## Water...

Known since time immemorial, Châteldon spring water only acquired its letters of nobility during the 17th century. To treat the ailing Louis XIV, his personal physician prescribed Châteldon spring water, which he had delivered to Versailles in bottles. The Sun King immediately adopted it, as did the court. In 1778, the discovery of its properties by a doctor from Montpellier, Jean-Baptiste Desbrest, led to its industrial marketing (12,000 bottles sold in 1843) and the creation of a spa establishment... seventy years later. Strongly challenged by the proximity of Vichy, Châteldon thermal spring waters fell into oblivion at the end of the Second Empire. In the 1930s, Pierre Laval worked to give them a new lease of life, but, due to insufficient flow, their exploitation remained limited. Today, however, Châteldon spring water can be found on the tables of the best restaurants, certain delicatessens (Fauchon...) and in the shops of the town.

Châteldon enjoyed a good reputation, in terms both of quantity and quality. In the mid-19th century, the commune boasted 123 hectares of vines, divided between 361 owners. In terms of quality, the Châteldon vineyards were (in 1744 – according to Legrand d'Aussy) recognised as "among the best in Limagne". Its wines could even compete in quality and taste with wines from Bordeaux. Its reds – light, delicate, very spirited, acquiring a delicate bouquet in the bottle – were even awarded second place in a regional classification in 1882. Decimated by phylloxera – an aphid that arrived from America in 1863 – later than the rest of the country (in Auvergne after 1890), the Auvergne vineyard was partly destroyed and only partly rebuilt. Between the two wars, industrialisation of the big cities emptied the countryside; former winegrowers became city labourers. After the Second World War, the vineyards were largely replaced by pine woods. Nowadays, there are a few producers working to restore the reputation of Châteldon wine. However, the town's wine-making past will always remain inscribed on some of its walls (see point 6).

## ...and wine

Despite their poor reputation, Auvergne wines nevertheless had their hour of glory, especially in 1885 when the Puy-de-Dôme was the third largest producer in France. In terms of the regional production,

## CHARMING TOWNS AND VILLAGES IN THE LIVRADOIS-FOREZ

The Livradois-Forez Regional Nature Park boasts a rich historical heritage. Its towns and villages form a hierarchical network of communities with complementary activities that include tourism, farming, forestry, crafts and industry. This spatial organisation of functions and activities dates back to the Middle Ages and, since the 14th century, has produced an attractive and even remarkable urban architecture. The Livradois-Forez Regional Nature Park supports communes in their efforts to promote the discovery of these lovely town centres.



## TO VISIT IN THE AREA

- Church and village of Ris
- 11th-12th century MH church with wall murals dating from the 11th to 15th centuries.
- Former fortifications.
- See the document in the Town Hall.

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

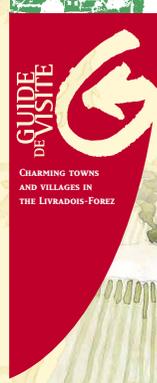
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For guided tours of Châteldon, please call the Tourist Office at: +33 (0)4 73 80 65 65



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# "CASTEL OUDON" CHATELTON small town, high standing



At the beginning of our era, did the Romans, who had settled in Auvergne and the Bourbonnais, occupy the region of Châteldon? The toponym "Castellum dunnun", a very Gallo-Roman resonance, may suggest so. The fief of "Castrum Odonis" is first mentioned in texts in 1200, whereas the feudal castle, located in Bourbonnais lands on the borders of Basse-Auvergne, had already existed for almost a century (1108) and a first enclosure, limited to the castle and its outbuildings, had been erected in the 13th century.

In 1285, Châteldon was one of the towns in the Basse-Auvergne to be granted a charter. This act gave the urban community a certain amount of freedom, in return for which the inhabitants undertook to "maintain the walls and towers and clear the ditches". The town gradually grew up around its castle. Its inhabitants were mainly engaged in farming and winegrowing, and the town soon became a flourishing trading outpost.

The 13th century saw the town's economic prosperity grow with the establishment of tanneries on the banks of the Vauziron and the Chazerelle.

The same might be true of the knife-making industry, which tradition unflinchingly links to Châteldon, even in the absence of solid proof. In the early 14th century, the castle and town were sold to Jean-Aubert Aycelin de Montaigut, bishop of Clermont. After his death, his brother Gilles inherited the town in 1308. The initial 13th century ramparts only protected the castle and its immediate surroundings; it was during the insecurity of the Hundred Years' War (first half of the 14th century) that Gilles II Aycelin de Montaigut built a second wall of fortifications. Then plague ravaged the region, forcing some of Châteldon's inhabitants to take refuge in Thiers. Despite this, the Aycelin family continued to work for their town. In 1354, Gilles II Aycelin established a market. His son, Bernard, endowed the town with a courthouse, a market hall (demolished in the 1920s) and a communal mill, arousing the wrath of the neighbouring town of Ris. At the beginning of the next century, in the middle of the Hundred Years' War, the town fell under the sway of a famous mercenary soldier, Rodrigue de Villandrando. In 1436, it was returned to Philippe de Vienne, a descendant of the Aycelins through his mother, Isabeau de Montaigut. He founded the Couvent des Cordeliers as penance for having set fire to a chapel a few years earlier.



The Châteldon logo, with the Aycelin de Montaigut coat of arms in its centre.



12th or 13th century coins ("Castellum don").

The history of Châteldon is marked by two families in particular, that of Aycelin de Montaigut and that of De Vienne. Originally from Gagne-Montaigut, the Aycelin de Montaigut family bought the seigniorship of Châteldon in 1301. For over a century, they continued to develop their town, first by protecting it with a second fortified wall, then by creating a market, a communal mill and a house of justice. After the Aycelin family died out in 1427 due to a lack of descendants, the seigniorship passed, through marriage, to the De Vienne family, to whom we owe the construction of the Couvent des Cordeliers in the 15th century. Their descendants sold the seigniorship in 1720.

If, in France, the 14th century was scarred by famines, wars and epidemics, the 15th century was the era of the renaissance. Châteldon profited from this new economic boom, expanding outwards into new districts. Traditional buildings with ground floors in stone and half-timbered upper floors housed shops and craft workshops. As evidenced by the toponym "Rue des Boucheries", some streets even became "specialised".

Rue des Boucheries would become one of the town's main focal points, thanks to its closeness to the Faucomets gate – the main entrance to the town, along with the two other gates (Rays and Montgibert) – through which goods and purchasers flowed. By the end of the 16th century, though, merchant towns were beginning to decline. On the surrounding hillsides, trade gave way to vineyards. During the 17th century, winegrowers' houses were built outside the walls along the banks of the Vauziron. These galleried houses are aligned in bands, sharing a single roof. The dwelling is on the first floor, the ground floor and the basement being reserved for the wine-making activity.

The years between 1850 and 1930 saw profound changes to the town following the establishment of the Rivet sawmill and the Duaygues furniture factory on its outskirts, and also due to the many craftsmen who helped create a solid woodworking tradition in Châteldon.

At the same time, town planning started to take shape. Some streets were widened, new ones were built, sometimes by demolishing "historic" houses, and the streams inside the town were covered over. The surrounding fortifications gradually disappeared or were integrated into new buildings. In the 1930s, it was decided to build a road on the hillside going towards Puy-Guillaume. This road still exists and offers panoramic views over the town and its castle.



**1 Starting point in the car park near the Gravières wooded park**

The Gravières park is bordered by the Vauziron, which rises at Rez-de-Sol, where there is a large deposit of white quartz, and flows into the Dore river (a tributary of the Allier). Legend has it that the knife-making industry started here because, in the Middle Ages, the inhabitants of Châteldon used to sharpen their weapons in its pure waters. A category 1 river, nowadays, the Vauziron is closely watched. Its banks have been developed downstream to contain pedestrian circuits and rest areas. Its water, at one time polluted by many undesirable substances, has now regained its former limpidity.

**Rue des remparts**

**2 Towers and ramparts**

The second wall of fortifications, built in the mid-14th century by Gilles II Avelin de Montaiquet, contained sixteen towers built of granite blocks. The two most northerly towers [Nos. 5 and 7] still stand on the left bank of the Vauziron. These are massive horse-shoe-shaped constructions, with thick walls, spayed at the base, pierced with cannon ports and linked together by a portion of the ancient rampart – which continues as far as the Town Hall (18th century) –, which has become a residential wall.

**3 Pont des dames and the Couvent des Clarisses**

The Couvent des Clarisses (see box opposite), built in 1650 and then sold off during the Revolution, had a very short existence. All that remains today is a memory and... the name of the bridge that allowed the "Dames" to cross the Vauziron.

**The Ordre des Clarisses ("the Poor Ladies"), founded in 1212 by St Clare of Assisi, is the female equivalent of the Couvent des Cordeliers. Châteldon's Couvent des Clarisses was built in 1650 and confirmed by Louis XIV in 1667. It consisted of a courtyard, a visiting room, a dolister with a chapel and a sacristy, a large building with two dormitories and twenty-one rooms. Some thirty people, including seventeen nuns, lived there for nearly a century. In 1784, due to a lack of income, only one nun remained in the abandoned convent. It was sold in 1791.**



**Water and wine**

**Place du 8 mai**

**4 A pleasant place to stroll**

The development of the Vauziron (aquatic plants) and its left bank make it a particularly pleasant place to stroll around.

**Rue Louis Duclos**

**5 Former Couvent des Cordeliers (At No. 3)**

It took nine years to build the Couvent des Cordeliers (church, cloister, chapter house, kitchen, refectory and dormitory), requested by Philippe de Viennne. In 1472, twelve monks of the Ordre des Freres Mineurs (the Cordeliers), founded by St. Francis of Assisi, moved in and provided for the religious education of future seminarians and poor children. The convent reached its peak in the 1630s and then fell into decline. During the Revolution, the church was used as a stone quarry, the statues were mutilated and the stained-glass windows destroyed to sell the lead. The tombs of the Viennne family were smashed. Today, only part of the surrounding wall is still visible, with the courtyard containing some relics of the original architectural features.

**Rue de l'Aire**

**6 Former vineyard run by the Cordeliers**

If the Cordeliers monks earned a living by selling white wine from a small vineyard near the convent, they owed it mainly to François de Viennne and his wife, Benigne de Grandson. The latter, after having bought a plot of land from a Châteldon winegrower, had given it to the monks. François, grandson of the convent's founder, allowed a door to be pierced in the surrounding wall to make it easier for the monks to access their vineyard. It was this same François – no doubt a wine lover himself – who had an ordinary wine press set up near the castle (point 10).

**7 Winegrowers' houses (MH 2000)**

In Châteldon, the winegrower's house (17th century) has a cellar and a vat room on the ground floor and a living area (single room) on the first floor. The latter, corbelled, could only be accessed via an external wooden staircase and a covered gallery (called an estre or aire). The under-roof area was occupied by an attic used for storing crops. As part of a programme to develop gîtes (BtB), the winegrowers' houses in the Rue de l'Aire have been restored to a high standard by the CRHPA (Conservatoire Régional de l'habitat et des paysages d'Auvergne).

**Rue Louis Duclos**

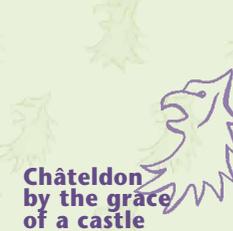
**8 Maison du Pisé (No. 28) and mineral springs**

Beautiful cobwork house, a building technique based on rammed earth. Option: walk up the street to the mineral springs. The mineral water of Châteldon was one of the first in France to be exploited (see article on page 4). The road to Lachaux leads to the Sergentale and Vécou springs, close to the bottling plant, which draws its water from deep underground.

**Rue du Fort**

**9 18th century facades (Nos. 15, 17, 19) and the old communal press**

This house most likely belonged to a notable or a wealthy inhabitant. Despite a tentative redevelopment, the symmetrical layout of the original façade with its windows framed in Volvic stone is still clearly visible. At the corner of Rue du Fort and Rue du Château, "Le bandeau" is a reminder of the communal press established by François de Viennne, shortly before his death (1538). The word "bandeau" comes from "bande d'aout", a privilege that gave the lords the exclusive right to sell wine during the month of August.



**Châteldon by the grace of a castle**

**10 The old stables of the castle**

Also known as "Le châtelet", the former seigneurial stables may have played a defensive role. The remains of a window jamb with a 13th century sculpted lintel can be seen on the gable [opposite No. 7 Rue du Fort].

**11 The Belfry**

A large square tower built of granite blocks at the same time as the primitive enclosure (13th century), the belfry, with its semi-circular door and its pavilion roof adorned with a bell tower, was originally the entrance to the castle's bailey. The granite masonry cladding was added in the early 20th century and the roof was restored in 1982.

**To the mineral springs**

**Rue du Château**

**12 The entrance to the castle**

In 1931, the castle became the property of Pierre Laval, a local inhabitant. Today, it belongs to the Chambrun Foundation, named after the husband of José Laval, the only daughter of the former head of the Vichy regime. The northern wing, built in the 13th century, can be seen from the entrance to the castle. In those days, this oldest part of the castle was protected by a moat which has since dried up.

**Path under the castle**

**13 The castle (MH 1926 – cannot be visited)**

From the top of its "60 foot high" walls, the feudal castle occupied a strategic position; between the Bourbonnais to the north, the Auvergne to the south and the Forez to the east. Built from 1108 onwards, it was modified several times. The sloping meadow below the castle, nicknamed "the English cemetery", is said to have been used as a burial ground for English soldiers who died during an assault on the town during the Hundred Years' War (Battle of Mort-Gate, named after the English leader, Gâté).

**Faubourg de l'Ollières**

**14 View of the castle**

Before going any further, make a detour to the Faubourg de l'Ollières to enjoy a back view of the castle. And why not continue up to the village of Gironde (1.5 km by road), where there is a beautiful andesite and grey granite cross dating from 1600 (MH 1942).

**Rue derrière les murs**

**15 Bridge over the Chassereille**

Covered over as it crosses through the town, the stream disappears here, near what was once the Roys gate (going towards Thiers), emerging later at the level of the Rue des Remparts (where it joins up with the Vauziron), where there is another Medieval gate, that of the Fauconnets (going towards Ris).

**Rue du Castel**

**16 Viewpoint**

A few hundred metres along the road to Puy-Guillaume, you will find a viewpoint offering spectacular views over the village and castle.

**Rue derrière les murs**

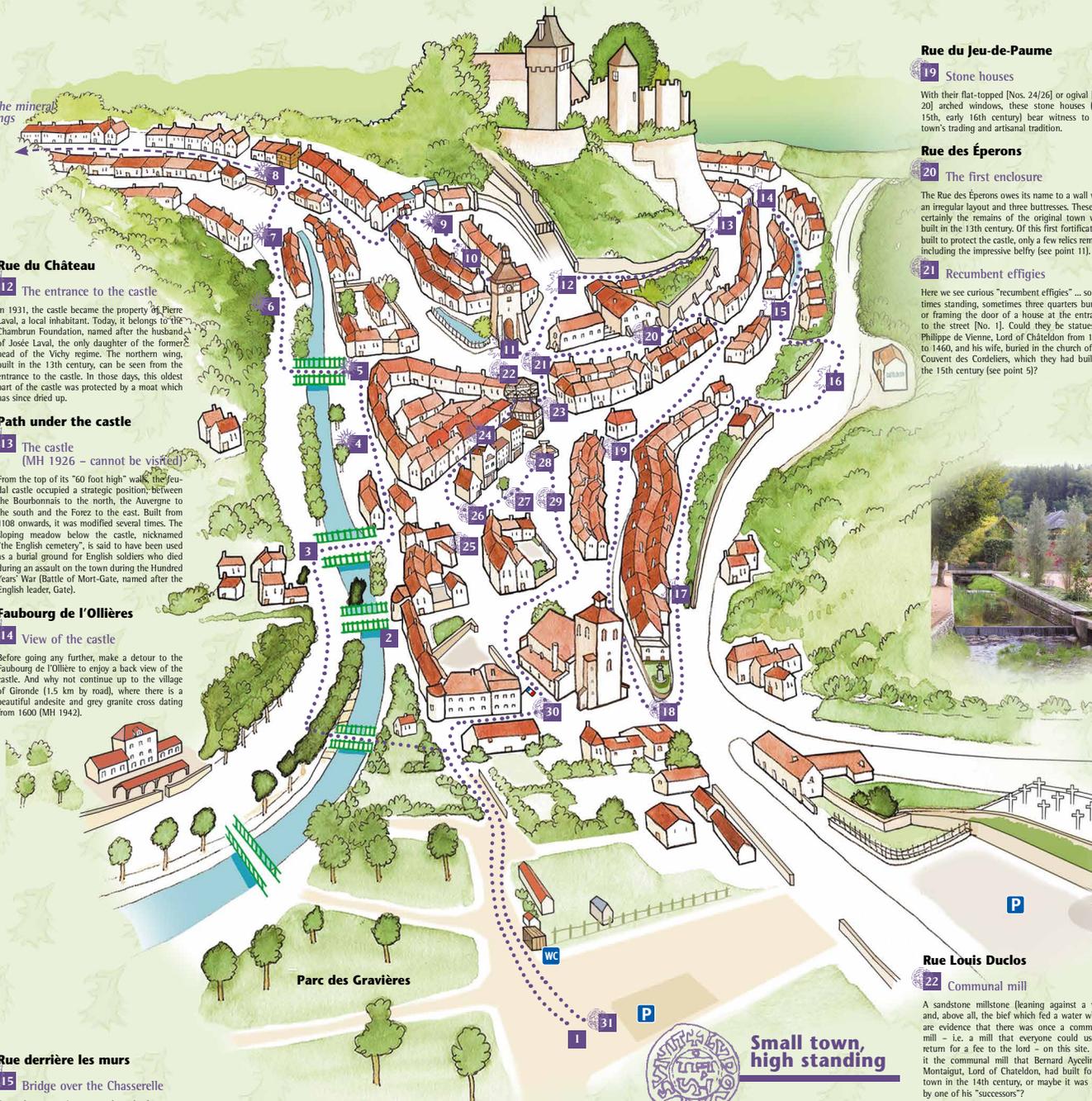
**17 Tower on the ramparts**

In this street, located just outside the second wall that protected the town from the 14th century onwards, the game consists first of all in discovering the remains of the ancient towers and walls, now integrated into the current building.



**Monument to Joseph Clausaut**

This magnificent half-timbered corner house – its original name unknown – is one of the oldest in Châteldon. Built in the 15th century, it has a spiral turret staircase and a stone ground floor with a window extending into a stall [Rue des Boucheries] – topped by two corbelled floors. The façade of the first floor is divided into three cross braces. The façade of the second floor combines cross braces and small columns arranged in a herringbone pattern.



**Rue du Jeu-de-Paume**

**19 Stone houses**

With their flat-topped [Nos. 24/26] or ogival [No. 20] arched windows, these stone houses (late 15th, early 16th century) bear witness to the town's trading and artisanal tradition.

**Rue des Éperons**

**20 The first enclosure**

The Rue des Éperons owes its name to a wall with an irregular layout and three buttresses. These are certainly the remains of the original town wall, built in the 13th century. Of this first fortification, built to protect the castle, only a few relics remain, including the impressive belly (see point 11).

**21 Recumbent effigies**

Here we see curious "recumbent effigies" ... sometimes standing, sometimes three quarters buried, or framing the door of a house at the entrance to the street [No. 1]. Could they be statues of Philippe de Viennne, Lord of Châteldon from 1436 to 1460, and his wife, buried in the church of the Couvent des Cordeliers, which they had built in the 15th century (see point 5)?

**24 Medieval stalls**

Although it seems likely that a fire one day disrupted the beautiful alignment of façades of most have existed in the past, the trading tradition of this street – for many years, one of the town's main roads – can be easily seen in the still intact ground floors of the buildings (late 15th, early 16th century). The windows, with their flat-topped arched lintels, were originally shopkeepers' stalls. [No. 6] Half-timbered floor with corbeling. (MH 1959) [No. 4] Beautiful wooden door in the Louis XV style (18th century). (MH 1959)

**Rue des Sept-Carreaux**

**25 Stone houses [Nos. 3, 1, 4, 2]**

Tradesmen's or craftsmen's houses, with wide bay windows whose entablatures at support height were used to display goods for sale. The façade of the corner house [No. 2] has retained its original ogival windows (15th century). Remodelled several times and enlarged on the Rue des Remparts side, it is a half-timbered floor, a 16th century dwelling, and also the Town Hall (19th century) and a House of Justice and Peace, visible on a lithograph dating from 1846.

**Place Jean Jaurès**

**26 Stone house [No. 5]**

The steep slope of the roof (with eaves blocks) of this house – which contains one of the town's most beautiful spiral staircases – may suggest that it was once thatched.

**27 Former Hôtel-Dieu**

Founded in the second half of the 16th century on the site of a former leprosiarium by Jean de Dailion, Count of Luze, the former Hôtel-Dieu [No. 1] had eight beds and a chapel. Only the beautiful half-timbered façade remains, the rest having been destroyed during the Revolution.

**28 Ancient Pharmacy (MH 1959)**

This Medieval house [No. 13], recognised by its half-timbering, is now used as an exhibition venue and writer's residence. Its ground floor, made of beautiful arkose masonry stone, overlooks the Place Jean-Jaurès and the Rue des Boucheries through two large round-arched windows that were once used as stalls. Note the carvings of a double caduceus framing the face of a far-ago owner at the bottom of the entrance door [Place Jean-Jaurès]. The two timber-framed floors are each divided into two cross braces. On the second floor, the balcony is supported by long wooden arches and protected by an awning that extends the roof.

**29 Courtyard shops**

Built in the 15th century, this building [Nos. 4-6] housed two shops separated by a corridor leading to a courtyard. The upper floors were served by two staircases.

**Rue des remparts**

**30 Eglise St Sulpice (MH 1925)**

With its 36 m in length, 19 m in width and a bell tower that rises to 30 m, the church in Châteldon is the most imposing religious building in the canton. Built in the 15th century between an older sanctuary (12th century) to the south and the rampart to the north, of which a few vestiges remain (notably a door – the guichet – intended to make it easier for peasants to enter at mass), the Eglise Saint-Sulpice originally had a single nave, with side aisles serving as side chapels. The side chapels were opened up in 1767 so that they could communicate with each other and with the nave. The bell tower – a large square tower with a pavilion roof crowned with a lantern – has been rebuilt several times, notably in 1750, after being destroyed by lightning. It houses two bells, the largest of which was "blessed" in 1736. Fans of religious iconography will find, inside the church, several very beautiful statues (listed), including a Virgin in Majesty (wood, 12th-13th century) and a Virgin and Child (wood, 18th century), as well as numerous paintings, including a Crucifixion (oil on wood, 15th century).

**31 Return to the car park via the pedestrian walkway**

MH: Historic Monuments

**Small town, high standing**

**Boulevard des Etats-Unis**

**Rue Louis Duclos**

**22 Communal mill**

A sandstone millstone (leaning against a wall) and, above all, the bief which fed a water wheel, are evidence that there was once a communal mill – i.e. a mill that everyone could use in return for a fee to the lord – on this site. Was it the communal mill that Benard Avelin de Montaiquet, Lord of Châteldon, had built for his town in the 14th century, or maybe it was built by one of his "successors"?

**Rue des boucheries**

**23 "Sergentale" house (MH 1926)**

This magnificent half-timbered corner house – its original name unknown – is one of the oldest in Châteldon. Built in the 15th century, it has a spiral turret staircase and a stone ground floor with a window extending into a stall [Rue des Boucheries] – topped by two corbelled floors. The façade of the first floor is divided into three cross braces. The façade of the second floor combines cross braces and small columns arranged in a herringbone pattern.