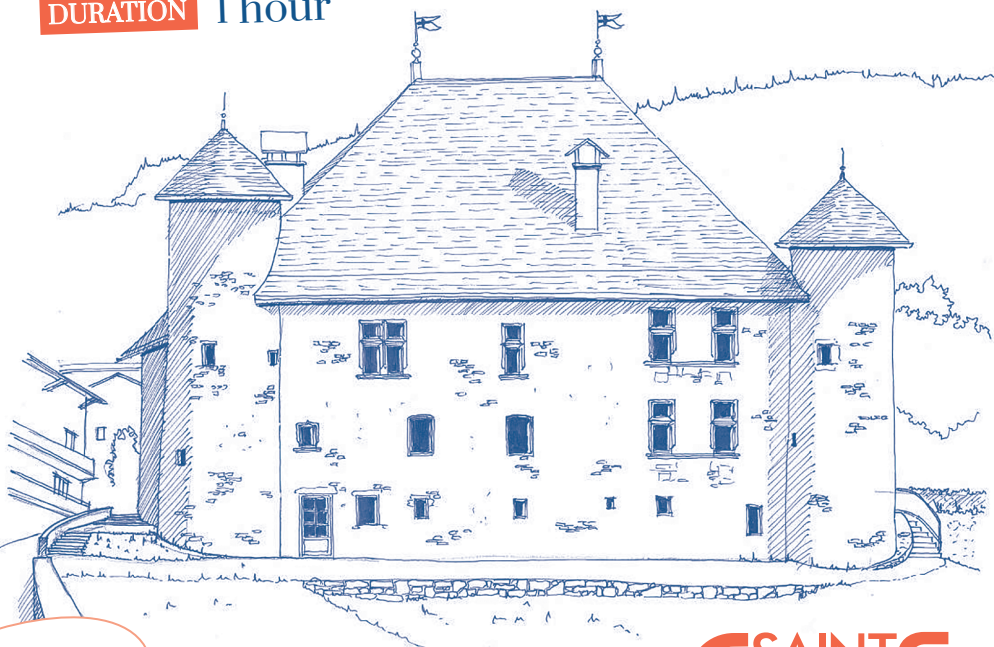


Walking itinerary in Saint-Gervais

OLD FORTIFIED HOUSES LOOP

START Tourist Office

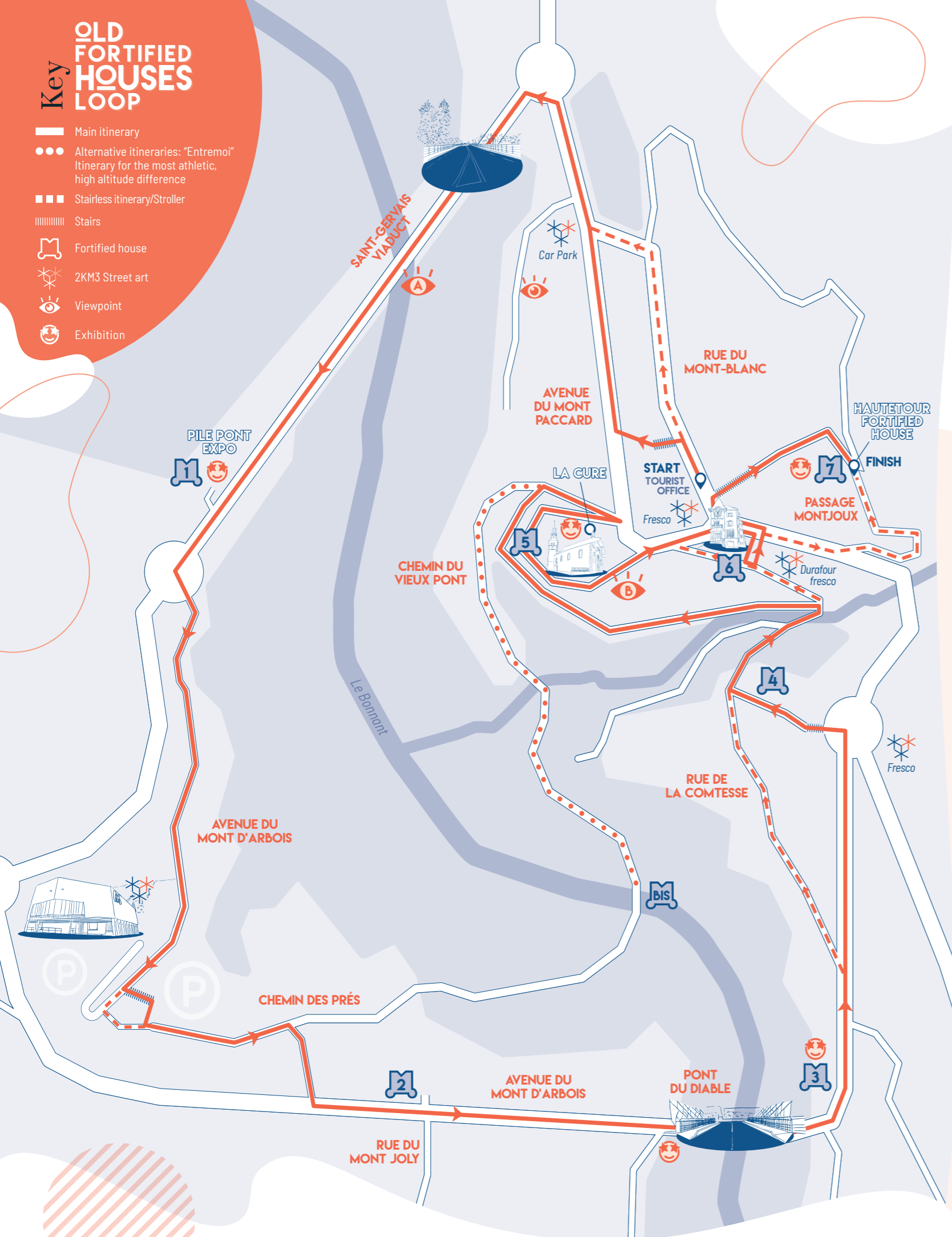
DURATION 1 hour



**SAINTS
GERVAIS**
MONT-BLANC

OLD FORTIFIED HOUSES LOOP

- Key**
- Main itinerary
 - Alternative itineraries: "Entremoi" Itinerary for the most athletic, high altitude difference
 - Stairless itinerary/Stroller
 - Stairs
 - Fortified house
 - 2KM3 Street art
 - Viewpoint
 - Exhibition



1 CHATELET RUINS

From the 13th century

Family - 13th century: The Chatelet fortified house is often associated with Countess Béatrix de Faucigny, but there is no current evidence that she ever stayed there. The Duke of Savoy Amédée V apparently inherited it. Several prominent families then used the house; 15th - La Croix family; from the 16th to the 18th - Du Fresney family (one branch also occupied the Hautetour and Comtesse fortified houses).

Function - Located on the remains of a moraine spur on Bonnant Glacier, the Chatelet site had a strong pre-eminence on the valley's landscape, giving it a defensive feel in addition to being a home.

Architecture - Although only a few ruins are visible today, imagine the size of the site: a 400 m² space, two towers, and a 200 m² inner courtyard! These remains also show an original plan juxtaposing several buildings with different functions, whereas most of the fortified houses in the area have a single building.

> To reach the next point, cross the roundabout, then the big cable car parking area, go around the building by the left to cross the residences, and join Avenue du mont d'Arbois. Don't look for a tower, but rather a few sections of stone walls topped with a tin roof.

TAKE A BREAK TO ADMIRE THE LANDSCAPE!

To the east, take in the Dômes de Miage and their famous ridge, Armancette Glacier, and the Aiguille de la Béragère. To the west, the Aravis mountain range with its highest summit, the Pointe Percée. And to the north, the Fiz mountain range and Platé Desert. Of course, there's the unforgettable Mont Joly, peaking at 2525 m and dominating the Saint-Gervais ski area.

PILE PONT EXPO

A contemporary art space in a bridge column? It's in France, and it's unique! Every summer, an artist is invited to create a monumental work for this raw concrete space. Free. Open from Wednesday to Saturday from 2PM to 6 PM in July and August, and Saturday and Sunday in June and September.

2 BONGAIN TOWER RUINS

16th century

Family - Former home of the Lords of Bongain, whose family arms were supposedly in the stained glass windows of the Saint-Gervais church, attesting to the power they yielded.

Function - This tower was certainly installed here to control the western bank of Pont du Diable, a compulsory passage to reach Megève at that time.

Architecture - Very little information is available on the architecture of this old tower, said to have burned at the end of the 19th century, as the current remains give us very few elements.

3 PONT DU DIABLE 1876

Function - In 1860, Savoy was attached to France by the Treaty of Turin. The empire made many efforts to improve the region's infrastructure: New roads, schools, and public buildings were built. As early as 1864, there were plans to create a new access road upstream from the village to Megève. In addition, a

new bridge that crossed the Bonnant at its confluence with the Nant du Panloup had to be built.

Architecture - The project was ambitious for its time: admire the beautiful semi-circular vault and arch with a 37 m opening. This is the first granite bridge in Val Montjoie.

2KM3, URBAN ART TRAIL

Since 2017, Saint-Gervais has been bringing art outside by placing works of art where they are not expected, creating an unprecedented urban art trail, from the 2KM3 car park to the municipal swimming pool and the post office's wall, via the DMC gondola station, and a fresco behind the Tourist Office.

4 COUNTESS FORTIFIED HOUSE

14th century

Family - 17th - belonged to the Du Fresney family (who also occupied the Chatelet and Hautetour fortified houses). 1740 - bought by the Octenier family, who still owns the building today.

Function - Symbol of the town's dynamism. In 1355, Saint-Gervais became the seat of the Châtellenie de Montjoie, which was until then located in Les Contamines, at the Montjoie Castle situated on the current church site of Les Contamines.

Architecture - Although it wasn't designed to defend anything, this fortified house has elements of fortified architecture: The two round turrets, crenellations, and merlons on its western façade are a fine example! Note the Du Fresney family coat of arms with the year 1578 on the round entrance tower added in the 16th century.

BIS ENTREMOI 14th century

(20th for the current gateway)

Extend your walk by taking the old bridge path under the church and discover the first Pont du Diable. Be careful; this itinerary contains a longer climb.

Function - This road was once the main passage to cross the Bonnant and join the road to Megève, where the gorge was narrowest. A tax was probably levied on passage.

Architecture - Its existence is attested as early as the middle of the Middle Ages and was the only stone bridge in the lower valley. It did not survive the disaster of 1892 and was carried away by the water flowing from the water pocket inside the Tête Rousse glacier.

LA CURE

Take a break in La Cure, to admire the works of some great mountain painters, such as Abrate, Bouillette and Samivel. Paintings, engravings, drawings and watercolours adorn the walls of the first floor, while the second floor is dedicated to Father Kim En Joong's artwork. Open all year long.

5 CHURCH 1698

Family - This 17th-century building has a typical Savoyard Baroque façade, which is present throughout the valley. The church's Baroque reconstruction was primarily financed by donations from St. Gervais peddlers who had moved to large cities in German-speaking countries.

Function - A church in the fortified houses loop? Until the restoration of the building in 2016, it was thought that the bell tower was built on a medieval defence tower. This theory ended up being wrong.

Architecture - On the south side of the church, restoration uncovered a funerary band. This ornamentation, supposedly temporary, consists of a black band decorated with the deceased's coat of arms painted inside or outside a church at their funeral. These blue and gold arms appear to be those of the family of Pierre Anselme, first count of Montjoie, who owned two fortified houses in Saint-Gervais, in Cupelin, and on the current site of the town hall.

VIEW FROM THE CHURCH

Look at the village centre. You should see the roof of the Hautetour fortified house sticking out. Move your gaze to the right and admire the view of the Comtesse fortified house.

Montjoie Valley opens up before your eyes. In the distance, you can see Bonhomme Pass, which leads to the Savoyard Tarentaise and Beaufortain Valleys, a strategic passage before Faucigny was integrated into the Duchy of Savoy in 1355.

6 TOWN HALL

17th century

Family - Anselme family fortified house, Count of Montjoie, then the Gontard family's bourgeois home, descendants of the founder of the Saint-Gervais Thermal Baths.

Function - The history of this building remains a mystery. It is known that before becoming the City Hall in 1936, the building may have housed a girls' school, the former Regina Hotel, and even the post office!

Architecture - There is no visible element of the old fortified house. Archival photos show roof transformations with the addition of this pointed roof with four sides and decorative wooden elements.

7 HAUTETOUR FORTIFIED HOUSE

1268

Family - 16th and 17th - Du Fresney family; 1798 - Joachim Polliand; 19th - Gontard family; 1903 - Maître Conseil, village notary.

Function - This is one of the oldest noble houses in the town! Located in the heart of the village, its strategic position made it possible to control and monitor the roads connecting Chamonix Valley to the Montjoie and Tarentaise Valleys. A tax was levied on passage! It temporarily became a farm at the end of the 18th century and then a poor house in 1860.

Architecture - This building has undergone many transformations. The 2012 restoration brought back some of the typical elements of the late Middle Ages—such as the millioned windows with their four-bay openings and bracketed lintels—back to life.

Today, the Hautetour fortified house is a cultural place with a permanent exhibition on the history of the Compagnie des Guides de Saint-Gervais and mountaineering. It also hosts artist residences in contemporary art and temporary exhibitions. Open the door!

FOCUS ON HISTORY

Béatrix de Faucigny (1234/7 - 1310)

Daughter of Pierre II of Savoy and Agnès de Faucigny, “La Grande Dauphine”, as she is known, played an essential role in the history of Faucigny, in the Montjoie Valley, at the end of the 13th century. Although almost forgotten today, she reigned for over 40 years.

One of her most significant political decisions was allocating many lands to the valley’s inhabitants, especially those in Saint-Gervais, which she particularly liked.



History of Savoy: It’s a love-hate relationship

The history of Faucigny and Savoy could be summarised in those few words. A first alliance was made after Peter II of Savoy and Agnes of Faucigny married in the 13th century before nearly 100 years of warfare ensued after their death in 1268.

11th CENTURY

Saint-Gervais became part of the Province of Faucigny

1355

Faucigny was attached to the House of Savoy

15th CENTURY

The County of Savoy became the Duchy of Savoy

1860

Attachment of Savoy to France

18th CENTURY

The Duchy of Savoy is attached to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia



OLD FORTIFIED HOUSES LOOP



Saint-Gervais is one of the rare towns in Haute-Savoie to have preserved so many of its fortified houses and remains.

While walking, you'll discover the history of these buildings and the families who lived in them, taking a plunge into the valley's way of life.

Saint-Gervais has been a strategic location since the Middle Ages, situated on the road linking the Arve, Beaufortain, and Tarentaise valleys. It was a place of travel and exchange, where economic and political control was held by the Lords' fortified houses around the Bonnant gorges and their passageways. Concentrated around the town, these buildings are full of incredible stories: Lords, Counts, and many great Savoy families have lived there.

During your walk, presentation panels provide you with information about each building.



PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS

One hour stroll in the centre of Saint-Gervais

As shown on the map, there are a few stairs to take, which can be bypassed.

Also visit:

La Cure, Hautetour Fortified House, Museum of Sacred Art, Pile Pont Expo, 2KM3 - Urban Art Trail, the Baroque Trail and Les Petites Boucles Baroques.

Guided tours, creative workshops, and cultural walks during school holidays and on request throughout the year.



CULTURE & HERITAGE DEPARTMENT

Tel. +33 (0)4 50 47 78 95
service-culturel@saintgervais.com

f: Saint-Gervais Culture & Patrimoine
www.saintgervais.com



VIVRE ENSEMBLE
DE BELLES EXPÉRIENCES

ROUTE ACCESSIBLE TO PARENTS WITH STROLLERS

Saint-Gervais Mont-Blanc has been awarded the “Famille Plus” label and shares this **easy itinerary without stairs** (see map) for families with children who wish to discover the city centre. Take advantage of this **accessible walk**, and see some of our **village’s hidden treasures** while learning about our resort’s history and cultural heritage.