

Map of the tour

Start : Brancion car park



After having discovered the village, don't forget to visit the Brancion castle. The Association of Medieval Memory will be delighted to welcome you. Rates and opening hours by calling : 03 85 32 19 70. More information on the site : www.chateau-de-brancion.fr



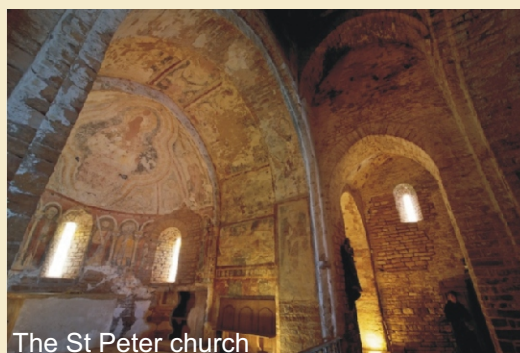
The hall

Walking tour Brancion Medieval Site



The postern

Legend



The St Peter church

Discovering Brancion

This theme tour enables you to discover the medieval site of Brancion, located in the rural district of Martailly-lès-Brancion. The 7 information signs that you'll encounter along the route explain that the site has been inhabited since prehistoric times. This 1.5 kilometre long walk, of average difficulty since there is a fairly steep climb to the "Paradis", takes from 1 to 1.5 hours.

There is also a theme tour through the vineyards of Farges-lès-Mâcon and Uchizy as well as the "Balades Vertes" through the Tournugeois countryside.

For more information :

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Concept Balades Vertes créé et soutenu par le Conseil général de Saône-et-Loire.

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Barbette on the south side



The Medieval site of Brancion

1 The “Four de la Baume” cave

Located several hundred metres north of Brancion, the “Four de la Baume” cave was excavated in 1913. Many different items were discovered : the bones of mammoths, rhinoceroses, cave bears and hyenas, wolves, badgers, lynx, foxes, oxen, horses and reindeer. There were also flints, human bones and crude pottery. These discoveries prove that this cave was occupied as of prehistoric times and up until the Middle Ages.

2 A specific flora

In the Middle Ages, several of the plants present in and around Brancion were considered to have magical or medicinal properties.

The Martagon lily was considered to be a magical flower, capable of opening locks and was an ingredient in many love potions. Alchemists used its bulb in their work on the philosopher's stone and knights wore it as a talisman on their chest to deflect the thrust of a sword. Its harvesting was governed by strict rules : it had to be picked by a gloved hand on a Friday, with the sun in the house of Gemini.

Fetid hellebore was used to cure madness since its seeds were supposed to clear away mental illnesses thanks to their purgative properties.

Swallow wort roots were used as a remedy against bites from venomous animals, poisoning and the plague.

These last two plants are today considered toxic.

A dozen orchid species have also been identified at Brancion. They are protected species, so do not pick them!

3 The ramparts

The wall dating back to the 12th and 13th centuries follows the edge of the rocky escarpment that delineates the site to the west and north. It encloses a surface area much larger than that of the current village. Semi-circular towers regularly punctuate the ramparts. One tower's foundations were uncovered at the “Paradis” end during archaeological digs in 2006. The ramparts were repaired in the 14th and 15th centuries as shown by the postern's second semi-circular avant-corps.

4 Celtic fires

Celtic fires are said to be of pagan origin and linked to the celebration of the summer solstice on June 24th. Forgotten little by little by the end of the 19th century, the celtic fires of Brancion were revived as of 1923 and continued on until the 1960's. The date of the celtic fires varied over time : Whit Sunday or the feast of Saint John, which marked the return to the summer solstice. The pyre was made up of bundles of branches collected when the hedges were trimmed and stored until the festival, with a rooster planted on a stake at the summit. Fires were lit from Alesia to Gergovia via Bibracte, the fire at Brancion being lit just after the one on Mont Saint Vincent.

5 Landscape

From the Paradis promontory, there is a magnificent view over the landscape, the fruit of a harmonious union between nature and the work of man. The gentle undulations, rich winding hedges, buildings made of ochre-coloured stone - farms, wine growers' homes, castles and churches - give rhythm to this landscape, steeped in Roman culture and bathing in the intense light of southern Burgundy.

6 The postern

Since the 12th century, the only access to the site is the fortified gate at the foot of the castle. At that time, it was a simple stone arch flanked by a round tower. In the 13th century, the gate was preceded by a rectangular avant-corps topped by a guard's room from which a portcullis closing off access to the castle was operated. In the early 14th century, in the ducal era, a ditch was dug between the village and the castle. A drawbridge enabled the passage between the two.

7 The “barbettes”

The southern barbette shelters the resurgence of a spring. Its foundations date back to the Gallo-Roman period. The northern barbette, built in the 19th century, was ingeniously connected to its older sister via a pipe work system based on communicating vessels and completed with two cattle troughs. They gave easier access to water, which was so precious to the inhabitants of Brancion. In the early 20th century, women still went to draw water and courageously carried it back up to Brancion in pails attached to a yoke carried on their shoulders. It was also, happily for them, a social moment, meeting together at the washing place to do their laundry. These two barbettes relive again thanks to their restoration by international teams of young volunteers from REMPART Bourgogne.

Where does the name “barbette” come from?

- Either from the celtic root “barb” from which we get French words that refer to water, such as muddy (bourbeux) and splash about (barboter),

- Or from the whimple worn through the 12th to 15th centuries by elderly women and nuns.



View from the church steps