

Secrets de village... Le Luc en Provence

Distance: 1,3 km • Start: Daudet car park

A stroll through the old town of Vieux-Luc reminds us of the eventful, sometimes cruel history that shaped this administrative centre: a seignury from the 11th century, a town where protestants could freely practise their religion, and a well-known thermal spa in 1900.



1 Place Pasteur: the so-called hexagonal tower was built between 1517 and 1546. It is 27 metres high, and has three floors connected by an internal staircase. The top floor has six tall, narrow semi-circular bay windows. There are gargoyles at the end of each entablature. This was an early watchtower, giving warning of any dangers from the east. The priory of St Pierre adjoining the tower is believed to date from the 13th century. It is of architectural

interest due to its oven-vaulted apse and its flat chevet (which can be seen from the Alphonse Daudet school). A larger church was annexed to the Romanesque priory in 1658, using the older building as its transept. This was destroyed in the 19th century, leaving only a section of wall with two engaged columns.

2 La fontaine de l'Ormeau: a substantial financial contribution was required from the village so that this fountain could be built in 1828.

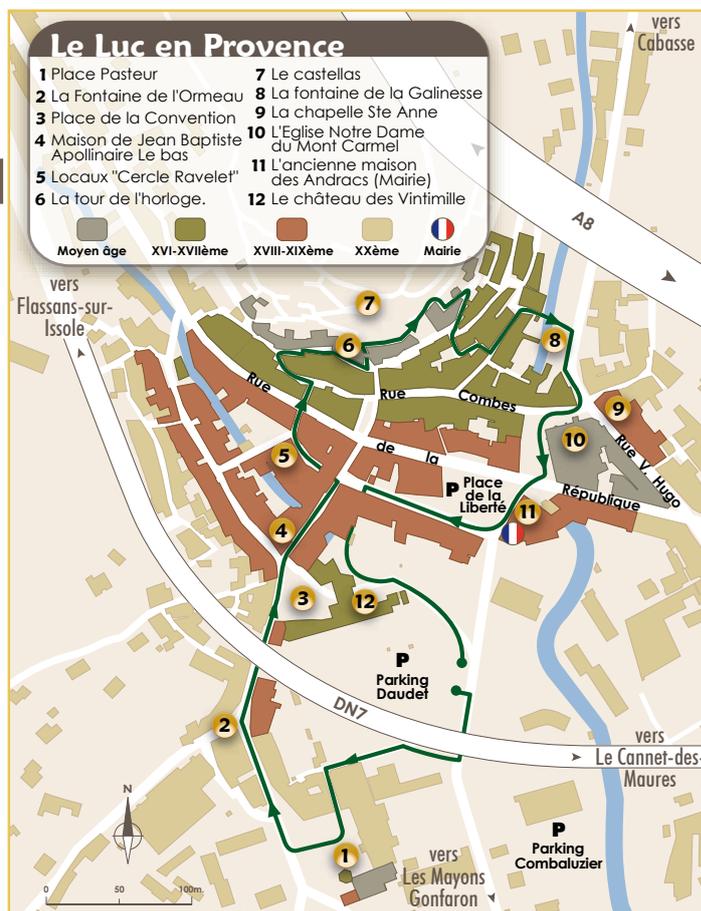
3 Place de la Convention: the courtyard of the Château des Vintimille.

4 The house of Jean Baptiste Apollinaire Le bas (no.30): born in Luc in 1797, he is credited with bringing the Place de la Concorde obelisk to Paris from Luxor in Egypt.

5 Place Ravelet: the premises of the Ravelet circle where on 2 December 1851 the decision was made to take up arms against Napoléon III's coup d'état.

6 La tour de l'horloge: the clock tower marks the location of the portcullis gate that allowed access to the castrum between the 12th and the 15th centuries. It is presumed to have been enhanced in the 16th century, when it became a belfry and the clock was attached to it. A wrought-iron bell tower was placed on the top in the 17th century. The stone house set against the tower contained the town hall. It was besieged by the rebels in the coup d'état on 3 December 1851: the municipal council was dissolved and replaced by a temporary committee, and a new mayor was elected. The village was taken over by the national forces on 8 December. The ground floor contains the remains of a former prison.

7 Le castellas: the ruins of the medieval village are visible beneath the vegetation. Its stepped alleys wind their way to the top of the hill where the lord's residence was sited, known as the château des Masc's after the night birds that nested in its granaries. The last remnants were destroyed in 1971 when the motorway was built. An underground passage connected the castle to the parish church, built 'outside the walls' on the plain. Le Castellat has been restored, so take the opportunity to explore the stairways and cobbled paths leading through the old village from the clock tower.



8 La fontaine de la Galinasse: believed to be the oldest fountain built from a spring in Le Luc, with its running-water lavoir or washing place. The Galinasse stream caused dramatic floods on 4 October 1924 and 15 June 2010. There are springs flowing near the lavoir.

9 La chapelle Ste Ann : the chapel dates from 1662.

10 L'église Notre Dame du Mont Carmel: a church built in the 15th century. In Provençal Gothic style, it contains beautiful works of art including an empire-style organ and a superb pulpit carved in walnut. It was the scene of the massacre in April 1590 by members of the Baron d'Ampus's Catholic league of women, children and elderly people who had taken refuge there.

11 La Mairie : the town hall was formerly the home of the Andracs family. The curious history of the Andracs began after the fall of the 1st empire, in July 1815. The family's ancestor, Charles Truc, owned a coaching inn where the Marshal of the Empire, Guillaume Brune, took refuge. It seems that the Marshal left a trunk under guard there, containing his riches. He was assassinated in Avignon on his way to the capital, and no one came to collect the trunk. It is said that this trunk made the Andracs a wealthy family during the 19th century. The story goes that Charles Truc knew what was in the trunk... and who the assassins were. However, he never told the soldier's widow about this fabulous treasure.

12 Le château des Vintimille: the Vintimille family ruled over the land of Le Luc from 1600 to 1789. Construction of the castle began in around 1600. The current buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries. In the 19th century, a military hospital was established there, followed by a religious school, and then some parts were converted into apartments. It was restored in 1980, only the classical façade remaining intact. The castle houses the regional stamp museum, and the Centre-Var historical museum. Its gardens were redeveloped following Le Nôtre's plans, and were filled with rare species such as a Ginkgo Biloba, the sacred tree of China, planted in 1900 by Admiral Giraud and still visible from the Daudet car park.

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