

Roquetaillade

Old Castle

New Castle



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The Origins: Roquetaillade means carved in the rock. It is situated on a rocky spur under which are a series of caves inhabited by man since prehistoric times (artefacts in ticket office). Oral tradition says that Charlemagne, the 1st European Emperor, gathered an army here in the 8th century and built a first wooden castle. The next 400 years would see periods of unrest and invasions and this castle evolves : with time stone replaces wood and the fortifications are densified. **11thC** archives mention for the first time *Roquetaillade* as a fortified village with its feudal system: the inhabitants had to repair the walls, keep the watch and in return, the Lord gave his protection, justice and a feast at Christmas for the elders of the village.

The Middle Ages are often decried by simplification as dark and barbaric. However, this period also included times of peace and social evolutions. Between the 10thC and 14thC a **Global Warming** allowed good harvests resulted in an increase of Europe's population and prosperity. Cities, castles and cathedrals were built which are the roots of our European civilization.

Aliénor of Aquitaine. Repudiated in 1154 by Louis VII of France, she quickly remarried 6 weeks later the future Henry II of England. In her dowry, she brought him her Duchy of Aquitaine (from Bordeaux to Poitier) which became English for the next 300 years. Bordeaux became a tax-free city, with flourishing trade with England: Bordeaux wine (*claret*) against tin and iron. This merchant civilization will fashion the mentality of the Bordeaux people, even up till today.

The 1453 Battle of Castillon put an end to the 100 years' war and to English presence in France. The same year the Saracens take Constantinople. This date marks the historical end of the Middle Ages in Europe. From those times, Roquetaillade's ties with England include a 25-year-old court joust with Oxford University for want of rent, still unpaid today...

The New Castle: In 1305 Bertrand de Goth is elected Pope under the name of Clement V, the first French Pope in Avignon. Thanks to Papal finances and with the permission of King Edward I of England, Clement built 7 castles for himself and his family in the Bazas area, his native country. They are called the Clementine Castles and include the New castle of Roquetaillade built in **1306** by his nephew Gaillard de Lamothe. Its architecture is similar to those built by Maître Jacques of Savoy at the same time in Wales (Beaumaris castle). This explains why in movies Roquetaillade is often situated in GB : "The Seducers" with Roger Moore...

Construction: There were two reasons to build a second castle at Roquetaillade. Firstly, the water source at the Old Castle was inconstant, a strategic problem in case of a long siege. Secondly, there was the desire to combine the latest in *active* defense techniques and a minimum of *seigneurial comfort*. The castle is of a square plan of 32m by 33m and is circled by 6 towers 32m high. They are round so they have no blind spots and are more robust against projectiles. The walls are up to 2.50m thick. There were no windows on the exterior facades, only 100+ arrow slits. Their number was scientifically calculated so that every square meter around the castle was covered by at least 3 shooting positions; the enemy outside had difficulty in knowing where the arrows were coming from. The castle entrance and draw bridge are on the west side. **The moat** has always been dry: there was no need for water because the rocky foundations of the building prevented any undermining of the walls. **The 40m Keep** is flanked by an octagonal tower protecting the only stairway of the building. Its height not only symbolized the power of the lord but also allowed the visual control of the edge of the moat and the curtain walls (*walls connecting two towers*). The sire's apartments are in the upper part of this defensive stronghold. They are equipped with fireplaces, stone benches and two windows, the only ones of the building, for a bit of light and comfort. This technically perfect architecture marks the apogee of *defensive science* before the arrival of gunpowder. In peacetime the castle was globally empty and only used to shelter the villagers and store food in case of a siege. The simplicity of its square shape with round towers on the corners and its imposing central keep make Roquetaillade the epitome of a castle. It is the last English built castle in France and is considered today as one of the 3 most beautiful castles of the country. **Siege** in French also means a *seat*. In other words, when you sieged a castle you sat down and waited...for the besieged to give in by hunger, betrayal or thirst. Hence, the importance of a well around which the New castle was built. Unlike Hollywood's heroic films, castles were rarely taken by *force* but rather by *time*; a frontal attack was a costly and perilous activity...

Survival. Of the 7 Clementine castles only Roquetaillade remains intact today: During the 100 Years War, neither the English nor the French wanted a conflict with the descendants of a Pope and pragmatic diplomacy pushed the lords of Roquetaillade to change sides in function of the political situation. In 1592 during the Wars of Religion the Protestants destroyed Villandraut, the former Pope's castle which was more symbolic. During the French Revolution the Marquis de Lansac would calm revolutionary ardor by opening his private wine cellar...in Bordeaux wine can be a formidable diplomatic weapon. Roquetaillade is one of the

rare castles in France never sold and continually inhabited by the same family. After the Middle Ages, the uncomfortable fortress was often inherited by the last member of the family, sometimes girls, who through marriage brought the *pile of stones* to their new families. Four families have followed at Roquetaillade since the beginning: Lamothe (about 500 years), Laboirie-Lansac (about 250 years), Mauvezin (about 100 years) and Baritault today (150 years), a 1000 years of family history!

Transformations Roquetaillade - The end of the Middle Ages marked the beginning of a unified France and the centralization of power in Paris by the King. The feudal system dies out and Roquetaillade had no defensive utility. The village is abandoned and the military building is slowly transformed into a *house*. In 1599 the Lansac modify the 1st floor, windows replacing the arrow slits and the old guard rooms transformed into fine living rooms, decorated by the first Renaissance fireplaces of the Bordeaux region. In 1865 the Mauvezin call upon the great architect **Viollet le Duc (VLD)** to bring their old building *up to date*. Despite his many projects **VLD** accepted immediately because Roquetaillade fascinated him; a real castle! Moreover, he had *carte blanche* and with this private contract there would be no civil servants on his back. At Roquetaillade he will be free to create his ideal medieval dream, with fully furnished living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms. This eruption of style and colors marks the missing link between **Gothic art** and **Art Nouveau**.

Eugène Viollet le Duc, a French Genius. The new political order of the 1789 Revolution had taken classical art as its official art form, a clean sweep of the Gothic style, symbol of the Royal regime. Cathedrals, castles, cloisters were left abandoned or transformed into stone quarries by unscrupulous people. In 1832 Victor Hugo wrote his famous "Notre Dame de Paris", a pamphlet against this vandalism. In 1840 Prosper Mérimée protected the 1000 emblematic buildings of France. This first list of Historic Monuments included Roquetaillade.

Gothic Revival is born at this time and **VLD** became its spearhead. Refusing the official Classicism of the Beaux-Arts, which he considered as a foreign architectural invasion, **VLD** learnt his trade by travel, ground study and drawing. For him the quintessence of French architecture was **Gothic**. He was commissioned by Napoleon III to save and restore this crumbling heritage: Vézelay, Notre Dame of Paris, Sainte Chapelle, Carcassonne, Avignon, Mont Saint Michel, Hospices of Beaune, Reims etc Mostly known for these restorations, his work is however much more vast. Great pedagogue, he wrote over 130 books on - Architecture, the Middle Ages, Russian art, the Incas, Defense, the history of houses etc ... including bestsellers translated in many countries. He will be a mountaineer, an archaeologist, a train designer ... He will hold the first Chair in History of Art at the Beaux-Arts in Paris. But above all he will go to the sources of Gothic art to elaborate his theories on modern Architecture - Rationalism and Functionalism: "The beauty of a building is judged according to its rational qualities and not its stylistic effects" and "the function of a building makes its shape". His polymorphic work will have a global resonance:

19thC - He will be the reference for **Gothic Revival** architects in Europe and USA. **William Burgess** will admit at the end of his life that *everyone in England had cribbed on him*. He created the structure of the head and torch for the Statue of Liberty. For the outer protection, he recommended hammered copper techniques as used on the roofs of cathedrals in the 14th century. He theorized the first skyscrapers built in Chicago in **1883** : for him they were transparent Gothic cathedrals where industrial iron had replaced stone. The fairy tale castles of Ludvig II in Bavaria and Walt Disney were inspired by Pierrefonds, the castle he rebuilt for Napoleon III. In Paris he created the School of Architecture, the Museum of French Monuments and defined the concept of French Heritage. He will be co-founder of the Society of Mountain Painters and be at the origins of the Barbizon School of painting.

20thC - He lays the foundations of the Art Nouveau movement for **Gaudi**, Horta, Guimard... In Germany and Austria the Modern Style will be inspired by his writings. His book on the 1870 siege of Paris will be used for the defense of Verdun in 1917 and the creation of the Maginot line in 1938. After the two World Wars, his theories will be used for the restoration of ruined monuments and certainly will be used for the restoration of Notre Dame of Paris after the 2019 fire. His thousands of drawings remain the biggest iconographic source on the Middle Ages and his thorough study of medieval stained glass will be used by Fernand Leger for his paintings. The greatest modernist architects will apply his theories on Functionalism and Rationalism: Le Corbusier, August Perret, Mies Van der Rohe and Van de Welde initiator of the Bauhaus. Frank Lloyd Wright, who invented *Organic Architecture*, was one of his fervent readers. Today Viollet le Duc is considered as the **Father of Modern Architecture**.

NB the order of the visit can sometimes be changed.

Old Castle (Vieux Château): - At the rear right is the 11thC square keep and in the center the seigneurial apartments of the 12thC equipped with a quadrilobed mullioned window and a staircase. The **Gate House** (tower on the left), finished in 1305, was the only entrance inside. On its right flank you can see the start of the wall that closed the courtyard and at the top a door in the tower which gave access to the walkway. At the base of the wall ran a moat, partly filled up today. To the left of the tower starts the village walls that lead to the village entrance and continued behind the village chapel before returning the keep.

Saint Michael's chapel is of Romanesque style, 12thC (semicircular arches). It is still used today by the family for weddings, baptisms and burials - *Match, Hatch and Dispatch!* The interior decorations were started by **VLD** in 1869. The boxed ceiling, with visible framing, has geometric shapes, tin cupolas and optical illusions. It looks like upturned oriental carpet and is reminiscent of the Norman cathedrals in Sicily. **VLD** had studied them when young and had written about in his dictionaries. Notice the freshness and vibration of the colors that have never been repainted; **VLD** used medieval painting techniques - natural pigment, oil and egg white. Towards the altar two lamps, that you might find in a mosque. At the entrance are screenings in wood and metal, called *mashrabiya*. They were used by the Sultan to hide his wives in his harem. **VLD** does not embarrass himself to use Muslim art in a Christian chapel. The altar, located to the East, is in fine white Carrara marble. It is built in *transparency* with colorful stained glass windows to play with the light of the rising sun. The baptismal font in the middle, also in Carrara marble, is encrusted with deep blue rare enamels and the polylobed pattern on its top reflects the zinc cupolas of the ceiling. This shape is re used on the cement floor tiles, a product invented in 1863 that is back in fashion today in France. The restoration of the chapel apse (the semi circular ceiling behind the altar) is planned for 2020. On the left, outside, is the door of the *needy*, which had the reputation of being miraculous to cure leprosy. An important pilgrimage existed at Roquetaillade in the middle ages until someone passed a sick dog through it, dressed as a child. Since then miracles have ceased and the door walled up. The crypt, accessible from the back, contains the remains of the owners for the last 700 years. Outside, a Gingko was planted in memory of the first cardinals nominated by Clement Vth in China.

New Castle. (Chapel facade). Here **VLD** builds a small drawbridge and enlarges the medieval *postern*. This is a concealed door in the wall, which allowed access to the secret tunnel in the dry moat, in case of a siege. **Carriage Door** (North facade). Here he adds a *dormant* bridge to facilitate the movement of horse carts in the narrow courtyard and enlarges a pre-existing tournament loggia. He places on it three family crests: the swan for the Blanc de Mauvezin, the Bearnaise cows for his wife and a *lion rampant* for their ancestors, the Lansac. **Main Entrance:** **VLD** does not touch this facade to preserve its original warrior and austere appearance. Four concentrated towers defend the only access into the building, its *weak point*. Nestled between the left towers are two stone *cabinets of ease* or siege toilets. At the door are concentrated three defensive systems: an arrow slit (left) and above, a *portcullis* and the *break back* hole or murder hole, used to drop stones on the attackers, not the boiling oil of Hollywood tradition which was source of fire inside. *As you go in beware of the step!* **Courtyard** - In 1306 it was totally *blind*, no windows or doors, but only quipped only with arrow slits. This was a defensive system to confuse the invaders, the access into the castle being placed out of sight on the left (visible in the ticket office). In the 19thC **VLD** condemns this medieval access and creates a new entrance in the courtyard in front of us. **The Keep** takes up all the space in the center of the castle. It is equipped with 4 vaulted levels: the 1st one corresponds to the dungeon, the 2nd to the location of the staircase, and on the 3rd / 4th to the lords private quarters, situated at the level of the 2 little windows above us. In the 19th **VLD** uses these as a model to create those in the courtyard. On the keep, he places two gargoyles that remind us of those he scattered all over Notre-Dame of Paris. They have 2 functions: evacuate rainwater (gargoyle means throat in old French) and secondly their scary monsters heads serve to protect the building from evil spirits.... *You frighten them away and shoo them off to the neighbor's castle.* Just below he places 2 swans, emblem of the Blanc (*white in French*) de Mauvesin family. **VLD** will multiply them on the ground floor where he works.

Courtyard - Above the doorway, **VLD** places the heads of the Mauvesins, a medieval tradition to welcome visitors. To sign his work he places his own head on the left. Opposite it, is supposedly the head of Empress Eugenie, the most *beautiful women in Europe*, wife of Napoleon III, for whom he was rebuilding the imperial castle of Pierrefonds. The **water well** is hidden under the flab stones on the left; it is as deep as the keep is high - 40m.

Staircase. In 1306, for defensive reasons, there was only a ladder here, to access the first floor. In case of attack, it could be pulled up through the opening in the wall and you could defend yourself from the first floor. **VLD** creates the grand staircase, whose rotating organization is inspired by his unaccomplished project for the Paris Opera. On the mid-landing, two swans: the one on the right holds the crest of Monsieur and the left one that of Madame *pictured* with Bearnaise cows. This imagery does not reflect her character but her maiden name, Galard de Béarn. At the top of the pillars he places vine leaves, symbolizing the Bordeaux wine trade. On the wall on the left he places a bat. **VLD** frequently used this animal: - for him the structure of the animal's wings reflected the Gothic ribbed vault and thus symbolized the link between Gothic art and nature: If the bat has 8 bones in its wings the vault above us has 8 arches. On the opposite, a monkey clings to the wall. *Monkey* is the nickname given to the apprentice stonemason who climbs the scaffolding to bring tools to his master. It is eating an apple signifying his satisfaction. This is a message to other stonemasons to say that the house is *good* - welcome, food and pay. Otherwise **VLD** would not have hesitated to put a monkey scratching his bottom or pulling a face. From the vault hangs a 350 kg gold gilded lantern designed by **VLD**. It is decorated with the crown of the marquess swans, vine leaves and its feet are shaped like the staff of a Pope in memory of Clement V. It was built by Chertier who made the treasures of Notre Dame de Paris, saved from the fire of 2019. In the room above, exists a mechanism with weight and counterweight to allow its descent to refill the oil lamps. Now electrified it brought down once a year for spring-cleaning. On the top landing two portraits of the Mauvesin welcome you.

1ST FLOOR

The Synod Hall, the largest room of the castle, is named after church cleric reunions held here by Pope Clement. Windows were *opened* at the Renaissance and a monumental fireplace replaced the original medieval one. It was designed by Souffron who built those of Cadillac Castle a few years later. It is richly decorated with Pyrenean marble and sculptures. Four female statues symbolize the cardinal virtues of classical antiquity. From left to right: *Temperance* looks into a mirror, *Force* controls a lion, *Justice* holds a parchment of laws and *Prudence* carries a jug of water. *Beauty is not a virtue!* In the center, saved from the Revolution, a painting dating from **1599** reproduces a 1511 print by Albrecht Dürer. It represents one of Hercules's 12 labors; his fight against the Hydra of Lerna, a multi headed dragon. On his right Iolaos in red, his nephew and most faithful companion, burns the cut necks to prevent the regrowth of the heads. Why put Hercules on the chimney? In a politically unstable era, the portrait of the king was rarely used; as modern politicians, they tended to change quite often.... Hercules and Greek mythology had the advantage of being constant in time and so there was no need to change the painting after each *election*. Also, Hercules is politically neutral... Imagine Donald or Hilary looking down from the fireplace at you and your guests for 4 years!

An unfinished decor. Two watercolors dating from 1865 present **VLD's** project for this room. The ceilings were to be decorated with the arms of the families of Roquetaillade and around the room, on the blue band, was to be painted a frieze representing a banquet in honor of Clément V. In 1870, for lack of money, this work never started and **VLD** only had time to install an ingenious floor heating system and a large display case with dragons, in which are exposed today part of a 120 piece table service of late 18th Sèvres porcelain (left on entering). **Since 2014**, almost 150 years later, this project has been reinstated by the current owners at a cost of 250 000 € and will last until 2021.

Family living room: In 1306 this guard room permitted, through the opening in the wall, the control of the access ladder and the surveillance of the ground floor of the keep. At the Renaissance it is transformed into living room, hence a 2nd fireplace, topped with an angel holding horns of plenty, richly decorated with cascading fruit finely sculpted. The angel seems to contemplate the military decorations on the outlines, as to signify the end of the Wars of Religion and the pacification of France by Henry IV in 1598. Four 16thC tapestries from Flanders tell the story of *Daniel and the Lions Den* of the Old Testament. The tapestry on the right of the fireplace corresponds to the end of the story. You can see Daniel at the top left swinging over the lion pit and inside the wild animals devour the intriguers. The portraits are all family, apart from Louis XIV (right of chimney). What is he doing here? At a time when there were no digital cameras or google or internet, factories in Paris painted his portrait to be sent to the provinces. This allowed the provincials to recognize him in case of a fortuitous encounter and be able to pay him homage. 14thC helmet belonging to the Lamothe, the first lords of Roquetaillade. Notice that the movement of its visor is at the origin of the modern military salute. Two 18th century entrance tables in gold gilded wood and other family period furniture. This room is still used today by the family for special occasions.

The Cardinal's room named after Gaillard de la Mothe, little nephew of Clement V and bishop of Bordeaux in 1351 (painting right of the bed). It was he who built the Cardinal's Palace in Saint Emillion and livery in Avignon. The four-poster bed is 16thC. The height of its baldachin gives the optical illusion that it is short, but it is 6 foot long: *people at the time were not necessarily small*. The baldachin holds curtains which can be drawn to keep warm in winter and also give you a bit of *intimacy* in bed. Beside the bed is a secret door... for even more intimacy. On the night table a photo of Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of the charity movement ATD Fourth World who slept here in 1988. At the foot of the bed a 16thC trunk. **Fireplace:** The angel here at the top is sculpted from head to toe. His head is very babyish but his body, in contrast, is rather adult and muscular as if he were coming out a *fitness session*. The Hercules in the center is a copy of the painting which disappeared during the Revolution; it is also a reproduction of a Dürer painting. **Furniture:** Praying chair with the arms of Brittany - an 18thC painting representing "the Adoration of the Magi" - a typical Louis XV Bordeaux style scriban (writing desk) and family portraits, including a 1780 member of the Bordeaux parliament. The *evacuation* of the room is done via the 14thC keep staircase (220 spiral steps) and a bifurcation created in the 19th. Direction the ground floor where we will discover **VLD's Medieval Dream**.

BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

Here **VLD** places a fountain to invite you to wash your hands before going to table: in the Middle Ages you ate with your fingers, a knife and your plate was a piece of bread. Forks were only used for *juicy* foods like pears. Above the fountain a beautiful floral frieze with remarkable fresh colors. This painting shows us the direct influence of **VLD** on Art Nouveau, which like Gothic art, is based on three things: nature, movement and color. **The bestiary**. All around in the staircase, at the fall of the arches, **VLD** distributes a series of carved animals. They are organized as a symbolic representation of the Universe. At the bottom, two aquatic chimeras protecting the water point, represent the *entrails of the earth*: a male mermaid smiling to the visitors and a Basilisk, subterranean and dangerous monster that you encounter in the Harry Potter saga. *Ground Earth* is indicated by two crawling animals, a fox and a wild boar. Higher up *Man*, intelligent with his hands, is personified by the Bat and the Monkey. Finally at the top, at the entrance, an Eagle and a Griffon embody the eternity of the *Heavens*.

Bottom of the stairs. These sculptures are finely crafted and **VLD** made a point of this as he considered the medieval stonecutters as the story tellers of their times. Since most people did not know how to read, communication was done *visually* via sculpture and painting. A bit like today where the new generations don't read but live on the visual screens of their cellphones. *Before going to table please wash your hands!*

Dining Room: Here in the Middle Ages existed the stables. As elsewhere in the castle the walls are thick and the rooms dark so **VLD** has to work on light and volume. He breaks the two arrow slits and opens windows. He decorates the ceiling with folded napkins, a fashionable design in the Middle Ages. The colors are soft and modern, mauve, yellow, orange and green, to give a sense of volume and height to the room. For the walls his designs are painted on canvas in Paris. Once finished, they were rolled up and transported to Roquetaillade and unrolled to fill up all the spaces on the walls. They are fixed on frames so that the space between them and the walls allow aeration, which explains their good conservation 150 years later. **VLD** found this system functional and cost efficient. They are painted with a blue background giving us the impression we are looking through a window onto the nature outside. This technique also gives light and volume to the room. On them Nature is teeming: birds, bees, snails, dragonflies... An aerial battle for survival. *Imagine a candlelit dinner*, with oscillating flames and moving shadows on the walls. At the end of the meal, thanks to a few good bottles of Bordeaux, you could have the impression that all these creatures come to life and fly out to you from the walls. The family swans are repeated round the room, hooked on trees whose shape are reminiscent of a Pope's staff. Here again **VLD** tells us, through his decorations, the history of the castle. For the cement floor tiles he uses a typical Gothic motif. They give the impression of a simply laid carpet on the floor. **VLD** indicates the preexistence of the stables by leaving rough stone all around them. On the right a large dining room side table, decorated with a *wild man*, comes straight out of **VLD's** dictionaries. **The chairs**, of near Art Nouveau style, are decorated with the swans of the Mauvesins. On them you can straddle after dinner, back to the fire and sip an old Armagnac: Cognac is a 5 hour journey, but Armagnac is just 3/4 hour away). They are even equipped with wheels in case of overconsumption! In place of the medieval postern **VLD** creates a small drawbridge, hidden by curtains with metal pivots decorated with iron Pope's staffs. To bring the bridge down it takes a little effort but thanks to the counter weight, it comes back up by itself quickly and easily with no effort at all. This makes sense in case of *surprise attack* on the castle. The whole room is harmonious and functional.

Pink Room with green walls. Here, in the old medieval storeroom, **VLD** creates a bedroom for the guests. The coffered ceiling in geometrical forms are reminiscent of the one in the chapel. Here it is decorated with crowns of vine leaves to celebrate the wines of Bordeaux and it gives the impression of being under a pergola. On the walls are painted golden Ms and green Gs the monograms of the family. They are repeated on the beds, whose design comes directly from his medieval dictionaries. Popes' staffs support the canopy of the beds. On their sides are notches to allow the passing of bed warmers, to remove humidity between the sheets before going to bed. Two wall cabinets are reminiscent of cabinet of Noyon, that **VLD** had drawn when young, but which disappeared in a bombing in WW1. Decorated with crenellations and fully lacquered they are simply hung on dragons heads, to make them easy to move. Present in the Yale University's Dictionary of World Art, they have also traveled for various international exhibitions: Philadelphia 1978, Paris 1980, Vienna 2005. On the arm chairs rests are decorated with golden swans. **Fireplace**, created by **VLD** as a source of heat for the guests. He places a rat under the Virgin to remind us of the origins of the room, a medieval storeroom. He places stylized lily flowers, emblem of French Royalty, to satisfy his clients but discreetly slides on the wings of the musical angels the French Republican flag : blue, white and red. On the sides are two enigmatic heads: a man who curiously stares towards the bed and a lady who closes her eyes and blushes. Does **VLD** tell us that boys are always more tired than girls? In the corner tower he installs a bathroom, a domestic revolution for the time. Above its door a Latin text "Vale, Vale, Vale" meaning go well, go well, go well. This answers the medieval and medical question "how are you?". Indeed, the medieval origins of this phrase comes from asking how was your intestinal health. This remarkable work reflects his eclecticism, his humor and above all his freedom. Pappé, an Austrian pupil of Pleyel, built the piano, covered with ivory and encrusted with ebony. There exists a second one, which is said to be at Windsor Castle.

The Kitchen is used everyday by the family and the chimney is fired up all winter long, hence the smell of smoke. In the middle of the room, for functional reasons, **VLD** positions a **Cooker**. The concept of a central cooking *island*, with a 360° workspace is very modern. Today it is very fashionable and for some absurd reason in France it is called a *Cuisine Américaine*. A stove in French is also called a piano, because the chef *plays* on different *scales* of heat: the hottest part being in the center where you fill up the wood. On one side are 3 holes in which you can put hot coals to do *slow cooking*. On the other side is a hot water tank, with water tap on the side, above which is situated a copper Bain-Marie or double boiler. In it you can ensure hot food at any time of the day. To avoid a space wasting central chimney, the smoke evacuation is inverted: it goes down, under the floor and rejoins the main chimney via big cast iron pipes. This system worked on the condition that the piano wall continually filled up 24h/24h with wood, otherwise the room filled up with smoke. This machine ran up until the 1970s, when one day one of the

owners discovered you could buy bottles of gas and gas cookers, in the side pantry today. To the right of the chimney a 17thC mechanical barbecue system, with a bell to warn the cook when it had to be rewound up. The roasting spit is inserted from the beard of the animals to its ass (de la **barbe au cul**); hence, the origins of the American word *barbecue*. Various copper cookware, cleaned once a year by family, friends and neighbors: A diamond-shaped pan for turbot, square flat fish/ An object looking like a giant pizza cutter is in fact a large saucepan cover / An 18thC bath heater / Bed warmers with long handles / Fruit presses 19thC/ An 19thC washing dolly or posser, ancestor of the washing machine; wood ash would be used as washing powder (phosphate) / A 14thC wooden barrel funnel - *700 years old, wine keeps you healthy!* / On the top shelves are large round copper basins, still used today for the traditional pig killing. The pigs hams are not cooked but are cure in salt for 40 days. They are hanging from the shelf in white bags to dry them and protect them from flies.

21^{ème} Century - Roquetaillade is not a museum but a living castle and the family lives here all year long. There is a farm with Bazas cattle, a pig and a small vineyard. The castle receives no direct State help and was opened up to the public in 1956 to save the remarkable work of Viollet le Duc. If you enjoyed the visit and want to help the preservation of Roquetaillade you can simply encourage us with a TripAdvisor or Google or even comment buy a bottle of our good Graves winer. **CHEERS !**