



## A LITTLE HISTORY...

Château de Saché was originally a Renaissance lodge. A wing was added in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and another followed in the 18<sup>th</sup>. The edifice was later restyled to suit 19<sup>th</sup>-century taste by its then owner, Jean Margonne, who often received Honoré de Balzac there as a guest. It was doubtless due to these successive modifications that Balzac affectionately dubbed Saché a “débris de château”, in marked contrast with the majestic Loire châteaux nearby. The museum was founded in 1951 by Paul Métadier, who was its patron and curator for fifty years. It has belonged to the Indre-et-Loire General Council since 1958.

### HONORÉ DE BALZAC

Balzac was one of the great writers of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Tours in 1799, he lived mainly in Paris, where he died in 1850. His vast body of work comprises some hundred novels written in less than twenty years, with the all-encompassing title, *The Human Comedy*.

Throughout his life, Balzac remained faithful to his native soil, Touraine. From 1825 to 1848, he paid regular visits to Jean Margonne, a friend of his parents, at Château de Saché. There, far removed from the bustle of Parisian life and his financial worries, the writer found the silence and austerity that enabled him to work between twelve and sixteen hours a day. *Father Goriot*, *Louis Lambert*, *César Birotteau* and *Lost Illusions* were all partly written there. Saché also served as a source of inspiration for Balzac, who set his novel *The Lily of the Valley* in the idyllic surroundings of the Indre Valley.

Access to the museum is via the pilastered doorway.



## FIRST FLOOR

### VESTIBULE (1)

The Margonnes’ furnishings could not be conserved and the archives were too incomplete to recreate them. As a result, the receiving rooms hold recreations of furnishings that reflect the Margonnes’ considerable fortune and the château’s atmosphere during Balzac’s visits to Saché. The furniture and other objects are also evocative of the interiors described in *The Human Comedy*, and particularly those of the Château de Clochegourde in the novel, *The Lily of the Valley*.

### DINING ROOM (2)

Living in Tours and Paris, the Margonnes regularly went on holiday to Saché to keep an eye on the work on the estate and to receive friends. Their considerable fortune came from a cheesecloth business and from investments in property. It enabled them to offer their guests an indoors that was worthy of large private homes in Paris. The wall decor in the dining room is reconstituted from the original wallpaper dominos set to the right of the faience stove, and resembles the type of paper sold by the Zuber factory in Rixheim (Haut-Rhin) circa 1805-1810. The frieze depicting mythological scenes may have inspired the description of the decor in the lounge of the Vauquer boarding house in the novel *Father Goriot*, which Balzac started at Saché in 1834.

### MAIN DRAWING ROOM (3)

The stunning trompe-l’œil wallpaper has been preserved in its entirety. It is akin to the 1805-1810 production of the Jacquemart et Bénard factory in Paris. The theatrical decor is particularly suited to the reading-aloud sessions that were Balzac’s habit. It was also in this large drawing room that Balzac played whist (a card game) and *tric trac* (a dice game) with Jean Margonne.



## SECOND FLOOR

### BALZAC IN HIS WORLD (4)

This room shows the different circles in which Honoré de Balzac moved, from his family and close friends to the Tout-Paris, the jet set of arts and letters. It also touches on Balzac’s cultural and artistic tastes.

### THE DRAFTING OF THE HUMAN COMEDY (5)

The aim of *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*) was to give an exhaustive description of society in his day and to depict all the varieties of «social nature». The work’s gradual development began in the early stages of Balzac’s literary career and eventually took the form of the 17 volumes included in the Furne edition (1842-1847).

### MANUSCRIPT EXHIBITION ROOM (8)

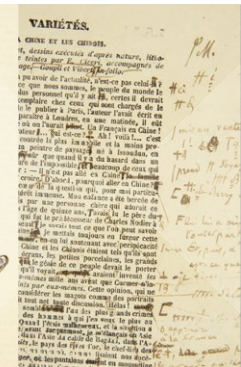
The precious documents on display here do much to reveal the perfectionism of an author who corrected his work over and over again: manuscripts, printers’ proofs, prepublications in magazines, and editions in book form for possible republication.

### TOURAINE IN BALZAC’S WORK (6)

The city of Tours and the landscapes of Touraine, along with their inhabitants themselves, inspired a number of Balzac’s novels, including *The Vicar of Tours*, *A Woman of Thirty*, *Sténie*, and *Droll Stories*. In *The Lily of the Valley*, Balzac idealises the Indre Valley and sets the intrigue in the two châteaux neighbouring Saché. These novels from Touraine take place among the six hundred volumes of the impressive Balzac bookcase presented in this room. These Touraine novels appear among six hundred volumes in the impressive Balzac library on show in this room.

### STUDY AND BOUDOIR (7)

Recreations of Balzacian interiors, one evocative of the attorney Derville’s study in *Colonel Chabert*, the other suggesting the ideal boudoir, such as that of Fœdora in *The Wild Ass’s Skin*.



### BEDROOM OF THE VICAR OF TOURS (9)

Recreation of Abbot Birotteau’s sumptuous bedroom in *The Vicar of Tours*, standing in counterpoint to Balzac’s bedroom, whose sobriety was almost akin to a monk’s cell.

### BALZAC’S BEDROOM AND WATER CLOSET (10-11)

Balzac’s correspondence tells us much about his habits during stays at Saché: he got up very early in the morning and often worked up to sixteen hours without a break, kept going by coffee that he had specially brought in from Paris. He finally had to leave his desk every evening, though, for politeness’ sake, to take supper with his hosts.

Return to the ground floor down the spiral staircase.

## GROUND FLOOR

### RODIN ROOM (12)

Commissioned in 1891 by the “Société des Gens de Lettres”, Rodin’s sculpture of Balzac went through numerous preparatory studies before finally being presented at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts exhibition in 1898. Critics of the day gave it a hostile reception, but it came to be regarded as a masterpiece after the sculptor’s death.

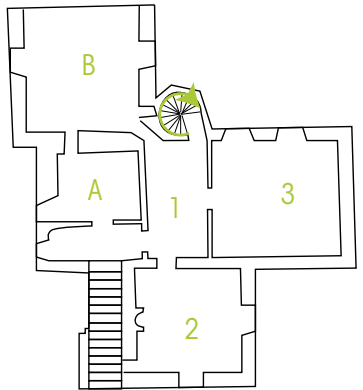
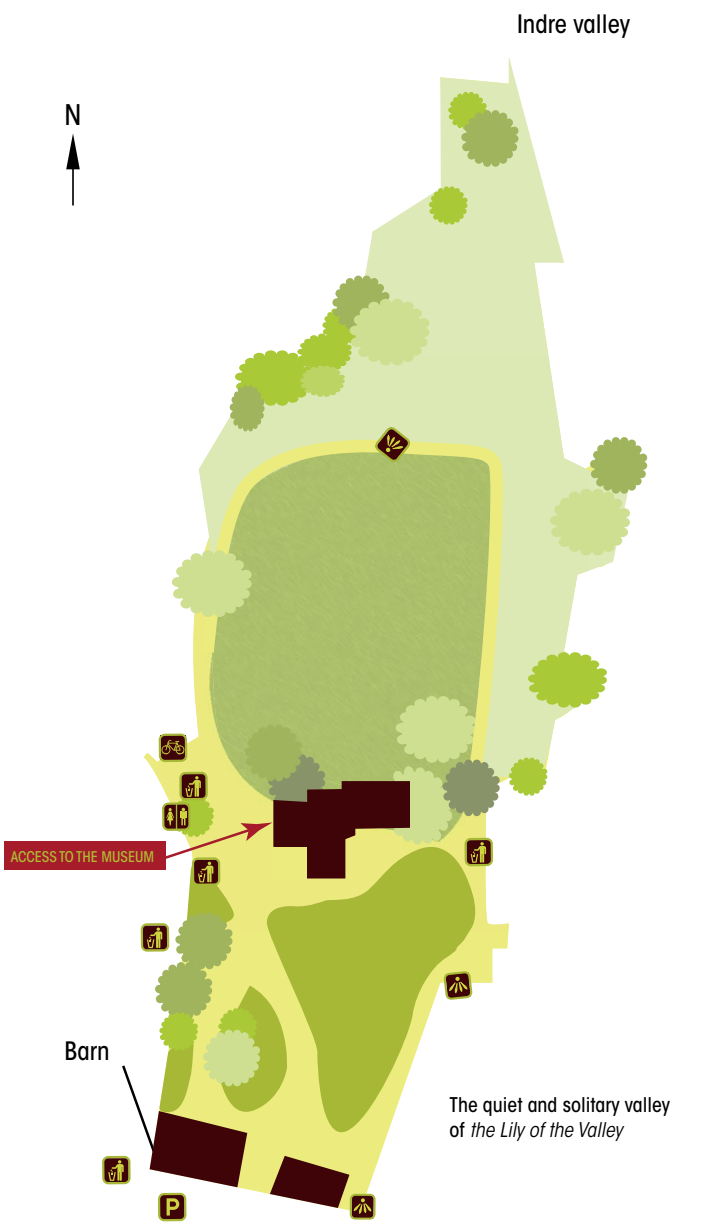
### PRINTING ROOM (14)

This room evokes the trade of printer that Balzac practised from 1826 to 1828. As manager of a company with thirty-six employees, he oversaw the printing of some two hundred and fifty works on the seven Stanhope typographical presses in his workshop.



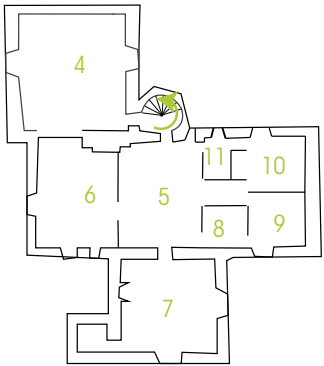


AFTER YOUR VISIT  
SPARE A FEW MINUTES FOR A LOOK  
ROUND THE MUSEUM SHOP AND A STROLL  
THROUGH THE GROUNDS.



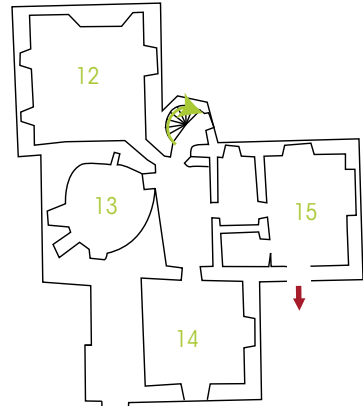
- A. Temporary exhibition room
- B. Temporary exhibition room
- 1. Vestibule
- 2. Dining room
- 3. Main drawing room

SECOND FLOOR



- 4. Balzac in his world
- 5. The drafting of *The Human Comedy*
- 6. Touraine in Balzac's work
- 7. Study and boudoir
- 8. Manuscript exhibition room
- 9. Bedroom of *The Vicar of Tours*
- 10. Balzac's bedroom
- 11. Water closet

GROUND FLOOR



- 12. Rodin room
- 13. Round tower
- 14. Printing room
- 15. Shop



07-2020 N°186 - Crédit photos: C. Roimbault - M. Jamoneau CD 37 - D. Bordes - Textes SMM



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MUSÉE BALZAC  
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WE INVITE YOU TO FOLLOW THIS ITINERARY  
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THE MUSEUM STAFF ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL FOR ANY  
INFORMATION YOU MIGHT REQUIRE.

