

DISCOVER BOOKLET

DESTINATION

*Grand Vézelay*



Office de Tourisme  
du GRAND VÉZELAY

Avallon - Montbéliard - Noyers  
@grandvezelay

Visit  
*N*OYERS



## *A little history !*

Listed as one of the **"Plus Beaux Village de France"**, Noyers used to be called **"Nucerio"** (walnut in Latin) due to the large number of walnut trees that grew there in the 11th century. Noyers served as boundary to the **Duchy of Burgundy**, which gave it considerable strategic importance. **The old fortified castle**, built in the 12th century on **St Georges hill** under the command of **Lord Miles**, was destroyed in 1599 by order of Henri IV.

**Nineteen of the twenty three towers of the defence wall** which surrounded the village back in the 13th century, are still standing. Aristocratic hotels, bourgeois half timbered mansions, modest wine makers dwellings, old chapels, convents, arcaded squares and defense towers are just some of the things you will see during your visit.

### *1 - Porte Peinte or Porte d'avallon - 13<sup>ème</sup> s.*

Standing eighteen meters high with a semi-circular arch, the gate was rebuilt in the **15th century**. **The frontage**, which faces the town, was once painted with coats of arms, from which it derives its name. Access to the small watchman's lookout on the first floor is via stairs on either side, which also lead to the patrol path on the defence walls.

### *2 - Promenade des Fossés and Charles-Louis Pothier, along the river*

In **1778**, having lost its protective purpose, the defence wall surrounding Noyers is demolished by command of the last lord of Noyers.

The stones are used to fill in the ditches and the river bed which ran along the wall, creating a promenade next to the **Serein river**. It's in the **fifth Vieille Tour (old tower)** that **Burgundy born Charles-Louis Pothier**, composer and songwriter, found inspiration to write famous French songs, including **"Les Roses Blanches"** and **"Félicie aussi"**.

### *3 - La Tour cachée*

**The seventh tower**, to the left of the **Hospice Saint-Ni-**



**colas**, has been replaced by a 19th century style structure. **The eighth tower, called la Grosse Tour (the big tower)**, part of the Hospice Saint-Nicolas, is set into the rock creating a small cliff face.

#### 4 - La Tour de la cave au Loup

**The ninth tower, La Tour de Venoise or La Cave au Loup** - adjacent to the Venoise gate - was a watchtower. Its name is said to come from the howling prisoners held and tortured within.

#### 5 - Le Saut Parabin

This is the old parade ground where soldiers practiced. It created a separation between the castle and the town. Its name dates back to the wars of religion. **The protestant prisoners** were taken there with their arms tied. If they did not renounce their faith, the catholics would ask them to "**Abjurer ou 'pars a bain'**" (renounce or get thrown into the river) and would throw them over the parapet into the Serein river that ran along the rampart walls at the time.

#### 6 and 7 - Porte de Tonnerre - 13<sup>me</sup> s.

The gate is adorned with **the Madonna and Child dating back to the 16th century**. She was chosen as the patron saint of local wine growers who, every 15th August would hang green grapes and pray to her to protect their vines from bad weather. Behind the gate are the remains of a small building containing gun ports (cannoniers) dating back to 16th century.

#### 8 and 9 - Rue des Vignerons et maison de la toison d'or

**In the 18th and 19th centuries, the winemakers** made up an important part of the population until 1890, when phylloxera killed off most of the vines.

This is an aristocratic mansion bearing a cross with the torso of a bearded man and the head of a sheep on top of a mound of fruit. Its design evokes **Jason and the Golden**

Cave au Loup



**fleece.** During the second world war, Nazi officers stayed in this house and left paintings detrimental to their hierarchy.

## 10 - le Lancer de Boule - rue Franche

The house at the end of the street bares the number **1231 engraved in roman numerals** above the door, representing the date on which the village was emancipated. Inside there are **three boxwood balls**. Since the revolution, the balls are thrown towards the **Porte de Tonnerre** every Bastille day, on 14th july. **This tradition is the celebration of the freedom of the village dating back to the 13th century.** Legend has it that the lord's wife threw a ball from the top of the castle and liberated the area between the town gate and where the ball stopped.

## 11 - Place de la Madeleine et chapelle de Saint nicolas le Vieil

The square is so called **in memory of François de la Magdelaine**, the town and castle's governor. On the square is the seignorial **chapel Saint Nicolas**, built in 1369 by the last lord Miles of Noyers, to serve as his family's resting place. After the Revolution, in 1793 under **the Reign of Terror** (which lasted from September 1793 – July 1794) , the chapel was ransacked and the grave destroyed. It was then sold as a national asset. Having been both a workshop and a bourgeois town house, the building now belongs to an antiques dealer.

## 12 - Place du Grenier à Sel et le Kamato

**The Salt Cellar** can be found here. In the 14th century the 'Gabelle' (salt tax) is instigated in Noyers to control the price of salt, which is under royal control. Opposite the Salt Cellar is a stone house dating back to the 15th century. This was **the House of Justice** of the district of Noyers and bears the inscription **KAMATO** above the door, a Greek motto which could be translated as "through suffering" or "through pain".



### 13 - Place de la Petite Étape aux vins

This is a small square where the wine traders stayed to let the wine rest for several days in vast cellars. Admire the different styles of houses (from the 15th to 17th century) that have survived and retained their architectural features. This is, in part, due to **Henry IV** early in the 17th century, prohibited corbelling and sculptures so that the timber could be coated to limit the all too frequent fires. In addition, the ground floor levels were to be built in stone rather than wood.

### 14 - Maison des corporations

**Many merchants and craftsmen lived in Noyers.** The house at the end of the street dates back to the end of the 15th century and was the headquarters of the **Corporation** of leather trades. The sculptures carved in the oak pillar represent its patron saints. The house is called the **Guild House or Corporation House**, as the Compagnons came there to complete their apprenticeship.

### 15 - Place du marché au blé

Burgundy and Champagne merchants came here to attend important trade fairs and markets. You can just see the **flamboyant gothic style Notre-Dame-de-Noyers church**, built between 1491 and 1515. Its tower is 33 meters high topped with a lantern turret which served as a watch tower. The double gate at the main entrance is separated by a pillar and capped with twelve empty recesses that once housed the twelve apostles (destroyed in the 16th century). A little further along is **the Musée des Arts Naïfs et Populaires**. In the yard is a sundial dating back to 1715, with an inscription in latin reminding us of the passage of time. In the **Rue du Jeu de Paume** is the entrance to the old Ursuline Convent. We then reach **the Place du Marché au Blé**, from where you can see the Town Hall. You will notice a typical half timbered house, the Maison des Sangliers de Bourgogne.

### 16 - Place de l'Hôtel de Ville

**At the beginning of the 14th century**, there was a very im-



portant building where the Town Hall now stands but sadly only a cellar remains. The successive fires over the centuries destroyed many buildings, but other typical houses are still visible on this square, such as **La Maison Jaune**, with its beams and sculpted corbels, and houses with arcades dating back to the 15th century.

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# The Serain

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