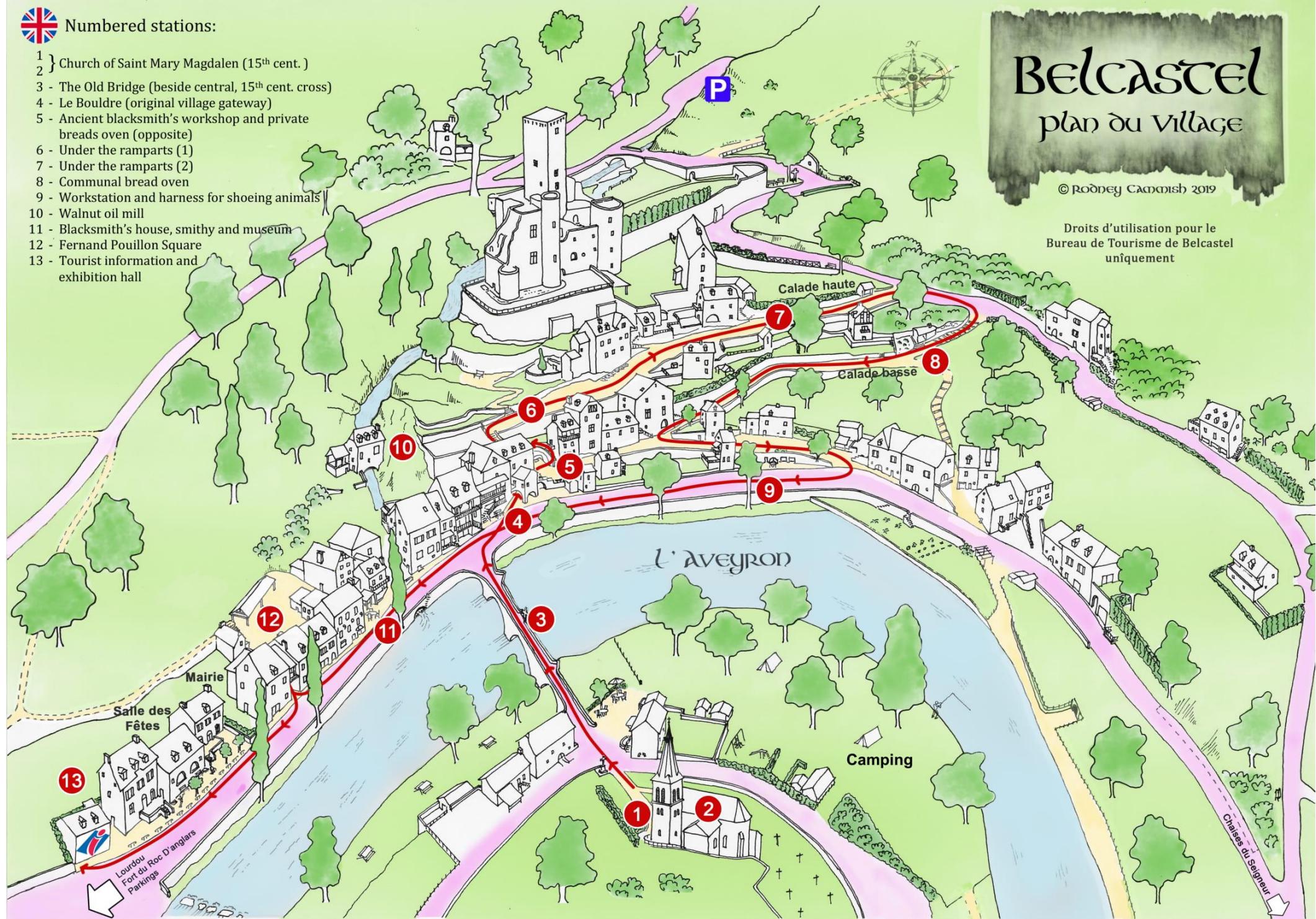




Numbered stations:

- 1 } Church of Saint Mary Magdalen (15th cent.)
- 2 } The Old Bridge (beside central, 15th cent. cross)
- 3 - Le Bouldre (original village gateway)
- 4 - Ancient blacksmith's workshop and private breads oven (opposite)
- 5 - Under the ramparts (1)
- 6 - Under the ramparts (2)
- 7 - Communal bread oven
- 8 - Workstation and harness for shoeing animals
- 9 - Walnut oil mill
- 10 - Blacksmith's house, smithy and museum
- 11 - Fernand Pouillon Square
- 12 - Tourist information and exhibition hall



Belcastel

plan du village

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Droits d'utilisation pour le
Bureau de Tourisme de Belcastel
uniquement

1 & 2 ST MARY MAGDALEN CHURCH

1. (exterior)

Dedicated to St Mary Magdalen, the church was built in the fifteenth century by Alzias de Saunhac to give the villagers their own place of worship other than the much older private chapel within the château. The church was enlarged in 1891 and restored in 1969.

2. (interior)

Stand in front of the altar to best appreciate the entirety of the building. The effigy of Alzias de Saunhac, his feet resting on a lion, is a classified historic monument, as are other works displayed nearby:- St Anthony; a Virgin and Child; St Mary Magdalen; and St Christopher; all evidence of a notable school of sculpture which existed here in the fifteenth century. The font, a simple curved basin with a wooden cover, situated near the entrance, is from the same period or possibly earlier. The glass artwork Stations of the Cross are by Casimir Ferrer.

3. THE OLD BRIDGE

In the centre of the bridge is a thirteenth century stone cross, placed on an altar carved with five smaller crosses representing the five wounds of Christ.

The bridge itself, typical of the mediaeval period, (12th -15th centuries) was also built by Alzias to give access to the left bank of the river and to the church. It is 56.5metres in length, the pillars and arches are of finely cut sandstone but the superstructure is of local schist. The road surface is of simple cobbles.

4. LE BOULDRE AND THE CALADES

This passageway, Le Bouldre, used to be the main entrance to the village and was closed at night with an iron grille, affording security to inhabitants, (and travellers or traders on payment of a fee).

The alleyways through the village and up to the château are called calades.

Occitan - calada meaning both a paving stone and a path paved that way.

Latin - callis meaning mule track or path.

The calades were restored by the municipality in the 1990's.

5. PRIVATE BREAD OVEN AND OLD SMITHY

The village blacksmith set up his smithy on the left here because of the small but reliable spring at the base of the rock which provided the water necessary for cooling the hot iron. There would have been wooden supports and a roof over

this working space where he shod the working animals, mostly oxen, used in farming.

On the right is the private bread oven, which is used several times a year.

6 and 7. UNDER THE CASTLE RAMPARTS

The oldest construction here is a pre-Romanesque chapel. The château-fort was built around it in about 1040 by the first lord, Guillaume de Belcastel but passed to the Saunhac family about 300 years later at the end of the fourteenth century. Alzias, the son of Guillaume II, enlarged the fortress into something approaching what you see today. Towards 1600 it became uninhabited and was largely abandoned.

It was the architect, Fernand Pouillon, who restored the building between the years 1974 and 1982 to create 'une ruine romantique' and brought the site and the village back to life.

8. FOUR BANAL

This bread oven was the property of the lord: villagers were compelled to use it on payment of a tax - 'la banalite'. this was primarily a precaution to prevent accidental fires in private houses.

9. LE TRAVAIL

Dating from the 1950'S this is a workstation which aided the blacksmith or farrier when shoeing draught animals, oxen and cows. There is an older one to be seen in front of the MAISON DE La FORGE.

10. MOULIN

Situated over the stream, le Riou Negre, which flows to the left of the restaurant Le Vieux Point, stands an old oil mill, used in the past to produce walnut oil from the trees which grow in abundance locally.

11. MAISON DE LA FORGE ET DES ANCIENS METIERS (BLACKSMITH'S HOUSE AND DISPLAY OF TRADITIONAL TRADES)

The craft of the blacksmith was always an integral part of village and agricultural life. This building contains a comprehensive display of all aspects of his work. On the ground floor is the forge, which is in working order, and the great bellows (used to blow air into the embers to increase the heat of the fire) as well as anvils and other tools, which were traditionally hand made to the personal preference of the blacksmith.

On the first floor you see the living accommodation of the last blacksmith, Fernand Moly, and his wife along side further displays of tools and equipment.

Other ancient occupations are showcased on the second floor; clogmaking; fishing and wood carving (silvistructures by Mr. Leron Lesur).

Outside the building is an old 'travail' used by the farrier when shoeing cattle.

12. PLACE FERNAND POUILLON

This small square is dedicated to Fernand Pouillon, the architect who chose to spend the latter years of his life restoring the château and village.

The statue in the centre, Diana the Huntress, is the work of Casimir Ferrer, as are those to be seen outside the Salle des Fêtes: the Toreador and Violinist.

ROC D'ANGLARS FORT AND LOURDOU GROTTO

The Roc d'Anglars (English Rock), a steep cliff about 20-30 metres in height can be seen beside the river about halfway between Pont Neuf and Belcastel. A ruined system of fortification, 10-20 metres in diameter, occupies the summit. In ancient times it would have served as an outpost of the château. During the Revolution it became a refuge for fugitive priests.

At the base of the rock, beside the river, is Lourdou Grotto, said to resemble Massabielle de Lourdes. (occitan: Lourdou = little Lourdes) A statue of the Virgin rests in a crevice in the rockface amongst flowers and Mass is celebrated here several times of the year.

CHAISES DU SEIGNEUR (LORD'S SEATS)

Leaving the village in the direction of Mayran, a sign on the hill indicates 'les chaises du Seigneur', a row of seats carved out of the rock of Roquecante. Their origin and purpose is unknown but they give one of the best views of Belcastel.