

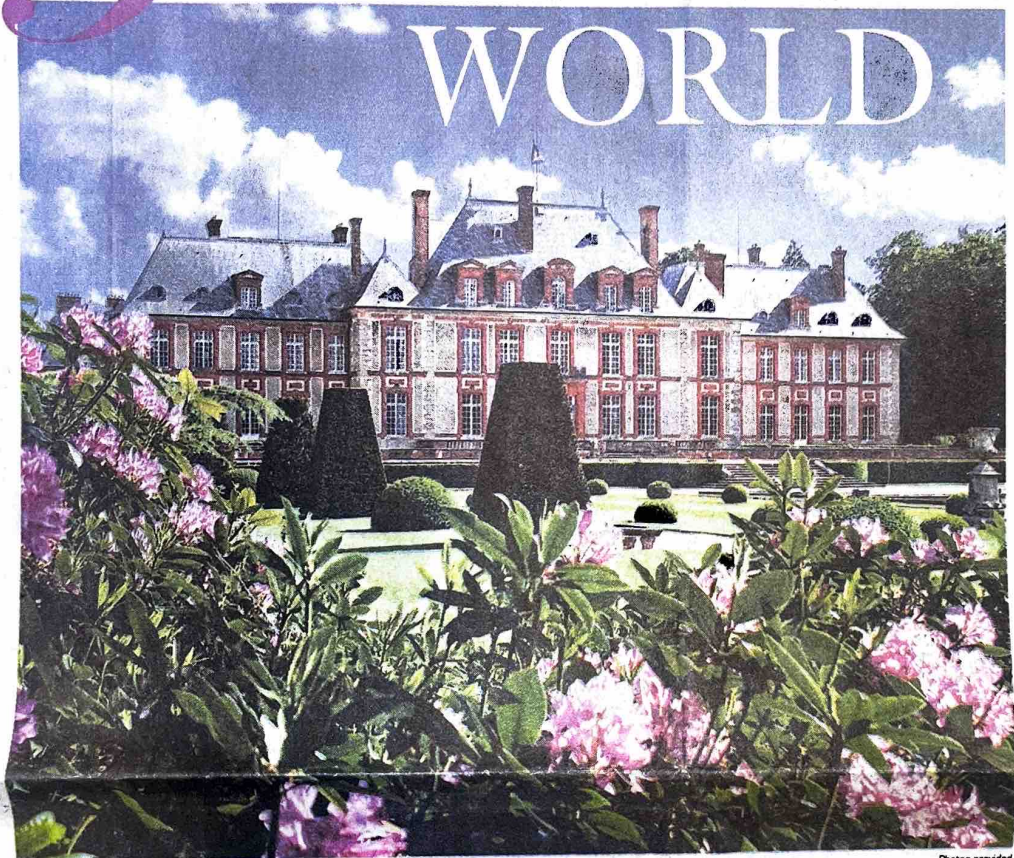
TRAVEL

ADVENTURES  GETAWAYS

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Fairy Tale WORLD



Photos provided

Chateau de Breteuil, southwest of Paris, celebrates author Charles Perrault, creator of Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. Boots.

FRENCH CHATEAU CELEBRATES CREATOR OF CLASSIC CHILDREN'S STORIES

By Steve Slosarek / *Indianapolis Star*



In a small house next to the chateau, a wolf lies in bed, disguised as a grandmother, to await Little Red Riding Hood.

Tourism has exploded in France, where famous Parisian sites such as the Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum and Arc de Triomphe mean one thing during peak season:

Long lines.

Escape the rat race and head to the countryside near Paris, where fresh air, fewer tourists and remarkable landmarks allow visitors to soak in the French experience without feeling like a sardine.

An ideal day trip awaits just 22 miles southwest of Paris in the scenic Parc Naturel Regional de la Haute Vallee de Chevreuse. Positioned center stage is the 400-year-old Chateau de Breteuil, a family-friendly attraction that magically combines French history, magnificently manicured gardens and some of the most famous children's fairy tales of all time.

INSIDE: Chateau is sure to charm the children, F4

TRAVEL COVER STORY



Provided

A "Sleeping Beauty" scene is among many displays of Charles Perrault's characters throughout the chateau and on the grounds.

Tales live happily ever after in chateau

By Steve Slosarek
Indianapolis Star

Chateau de Breteuil is a celebration of Charles Perrault, the author of such folk tales as "Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood" and "Puss in Boots." Displays and more than 50 wax figures of these characters are spread throughout the chateau and on the grounds.

The marquis of the chateau, 63-year-old Henri-Francois de Breteuil, said half of last year's 103,000 visitors were children.

Why not? Near a small playground to the side of the chateau, a tiny house reveals a familiar scene behind glass: a wolf lying in bed, disguised as a grandmother, awaiting Little Red Riding Hood. In the chateau's basement, a sleeping dog lies next to a beautiful woman, who, of course, is sleeping.

Near the gardens, a huge labyrinth invites children to traverse the hedged maze to find Cinderella and her prince. Puss in Boots appears in the chateau, and outbuildings feature Tom Thumb, Bluebeard and others.

Perrault belongs here because of his friendship in the 1600s with the chateau's former marquis, Louis de Breteuil. They served under Louis XIV; Perrault as minister of finance, Breteuil as director of the treasury.

The focus on Perrault is subtle, not commercial. The displays quietly blend in with the other attractions, which are numerous and breathtaking.

Visitors who arrive two hours before the first scheduled guided tour of the chateau will be astounded by the serenity. We encountered no other cars in the parking lot, only the sound of chirping birds. That, and an occasional stirring of white reindeer in the moat in front of the chateau.

The real visual treat begins at the back of the chateau, where a 200-acre park slopes

down to the bottom of the high valley. A tree-enclosed, serpentine-style walkway leads to large ponds full of ducks.

A different path back treats walkers to a yew mosaic, a brook, a spring and the lush green labyrinth. Lavish flower gardens and fruit trees add to the charm.

As for the actual chateau, self-guided walks through the basement/kitchen are allowed. A guided tour, conducted in French, lets you see the rest of the 23,700-square-foot, 41-room mansion, which features ornate entertainment rooms and a chapel.

The grandiose home of the Breteuil aristocratic dynasty was built between 1604 and 1610. The Breteuil family closely served three kings of France, Louis XIV-XVI.

Baron de Breteuil was prime minister to Louis XVI and present during the 1785 "diamond necklace scandal" of Marie Antoinette. Paintings and wax figures depict that scene and others, including scientist Emilie de Breteuil (1706-49), who was involved with enlightenment writer Voltaire.

The crown jewel of the mansion is the Teschen Table in the treasure room. The spectacular table-top is encrusted with 128 semi-precious stones mounted in gilt bronze and petrified wood. It was

given to Baron de Breteuil by Austrian empress Marie Teresa, mother of Marie Antoinette, for his mediation of tense talks between her and the king of Prussia.

The baron's successor was his nephew, a direct ancestor to the current marquis.

"It has been father-son ever since," Henri-Francois de Breteuil said.

"On Aug. 25, 1944, my father threw a big ball right here for the American Army for liberating our area. Three years ago, on the 60th anniversary, two officers came back to France looking for a chateau they had freed but not remembering where it was.

"They pulled up here, saw our beautiful chateau and knocked on my door. They had tears in their eyes."



The Enquirer

Want to go beyond Paris? Try one of these day trips

GIVERNY

The skinny: Claude Monet's original works are all over Paris, but to get a real sense of the Impressionist painter's inspiration, a trip to Giverny is a must. Monet made his home here from 1883 until his death in 1926. The country house features many rooms decorated to re-create the look of when he lived there. Highlights include a fully restored kitchen, Japanese prints and a picturesque view from his bedroom. But the stars are the gardens. Your camera will get a workout in the flower garden, and an underground passage leads to even greater beauty at the water gardens. Full of weeping willows, ponds, water lilies and the famous Japanese bridge, the asymmetrical gardens inspired Monet's most renowned paintings.

Info: Open 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily except holidays that are observed on Mondays. 84 Rue Claude Monet in Giverny, France (34 miles northwest of Paris), 5.50 euros (about \$8), children 7-12 3 euros, 8 and younger free, 011-33-02-3251-2821, www.fondation-monet.com.

THE CHUNNEL

The skinny: London as a day trip? You bet. If only airplanes



Associated Press

London, home to the Tower Bridge, is just a 100-minute train ride away, past the French countryside and under the English Channel.

could run as smoothly as the Eurostar train ride between Paris and London, which takes about 1 hour, 40 minutes each way. The 18-coach train, which can seat 650, leaves precisely on time, rides smoothly and features comfortable and spacious seating. The Eurostar passes through the French countryside for more than an hour before dipping below the English Channel. The view is pitch black until you hit land in England, see a traffic backup at customs and thank yourself for buying the train ticket. The train arrives at

Waterloo Station at the footsteps of the London Eye, Big Ben, Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. The popular Tower of London is just one tube (subway) stop away. Whatever you do, don't forget upscale and unparalleled department store Harrods (We stayed one night at the nearby Egerton House Hotel.)

Info: Catch train at Gare du Nord station in Paris, one-way price is 74 euros (about \$107) for economy class (children 51 euros), 800-387-6782. www.raileurope.com.

WISH YOU WERE HERE



Last winter, Don and Carol Streitenberger of White Oak (left) and Kay and Paul Peterson of Fairfield took a 10-day vacation to the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas. Both couples were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries.

Why they like this photo: Carol and Kay have known each other since the fourth grade at Kirby Road School in Northside. They have remained friends and still spend time together.

IF YOU GO

What: Chateau de Breteuil.

Where: Chevreuse, France, 22 miles southwest of Paris.

When: Gardens open at 10 a.m. Tours start at 2:30 p.m., with last tour at 5:30 p.m. (there is an 11:30 a.m. tour on Sundays and holidays).

Admission: 7.90 euros (about \$11.50) for gardens only, 11.90 euros for gardens/tour.

Age 18 and younger: 8.90 euros for gardens and guided tour.

Information: 011-33-01-3052-0502 or www.chateaudubreteuil.fr.



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or go to www.cincyhousesofhope.com

OR email us at hohgingerbread@aol.com

Entries will be due at Town Hall by Thursday, Dec. 6th at 7:00pm

Entries will be on display at Town Hall on Saturday, Dec. 8th and Sunday, Dec. 9th

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