



The Chocolate Box Village

Photos by Georgianna Lane and David C Phillips - Text by Alice White Walker

The center of the triangle made up of Beauvais, Rouen and Amiens, Gerberoy lives up to its name as one of the “Most Beautiful Villages in France.” Join us on a tour around this enchanting rose-covered hamlet in the heart of Oise.



There are few places in France where you can retrace the footsteps of William the Conqueror, behold a view beloved by artists and take in the fragrance of a thousand roses. Gerberoy is one of them.

History is ingrained into every ounce of Gerberoy's soil. Its key position on the frontier of the Norman and French duchies saw it besieged five times during the Hundred Years' War. The epitome of persistence, it was rebuilt after each devastation. This legendary strength was rewarded when Gerberoy was upgraded to a *ville* by King Phillippe Auguste in 1202, and to this day, it remains the smallest town in France.

LA VILLE AUX MILLE ROSIERS

1. Gerberoy attracts tourists all year round but particularly in the late spring, when the roses are in full bloom.
2. A view from the ramparts over the village, with its maze of ancient walls.
3. Architectural features, like this vaulted arch, offer a glimpse into Gerberoy's illustrious past.



OPPOSITE

This house, with its periwinkle blue frame, is one of the must-see stops in Gerberoy.







COUNTRY CUTE

1. *Maisons à colombages* (timber-framed houses) are found throughout the village.
2. Vigilant cats on neighborhood watch.
3. As one of “*Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*,” locals have to make sure their gardens and stoops are in immaculate condition.



Gerberoy's legacy may come from historical events, but nowadays, its popularity flourishes thanks to its romantic aesthetic. With its cobblestones, rainbow *maisons à colombage* (timber-framed houses) and rambling, fragrant nature, a visit to Gerberoy is a multi-sensory experience.

Fondly known as “the town of a thousand rose bushes,” every pathway, wall and door frame is lined with lush foliage and roses of every variety and color.

Gerberoy's ongoing status as one of “*Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*” means that the 100 or so locals have the responsibility of ensuring their houses, gardens and stoops are perfectly maintained. The village draws crowds throughout the year but especially in late spring, when the roses are in full bloom.



“ *Artists flock
to capture
Gerberoy's beauty* ”

Artist Henri Le Sidaner purchased land with fortress ruins
and transformed it into a public garden.



Artists in particular flock to capture the beauty of this spectacular setting. One such artist was Henri Le Sidaner, a Post-Impressionist painter and town resident in the early 1900s. He arrived in Gerberoy seeking a property where he could find inspiration and paint — like his contemporary, Monet — and was immediately taken in by its country charm. Le Sidaner purchased land with fortress ruins and transformed it into an impressive space that today is open to the public. He also started the Fête des Roses — a tradition that continues to be held on the first Sunday in June.

Gerberoy's enveloping flora are complemented by the village's lack of modernity. There are no telephone or electrical cables, no advertising and very few shops, aside from a ceramics boutique and an art gallery.

And while the roses continue to grow around the age-old foundations, Gerberoy exists as it did centuries ago — frozen in time.



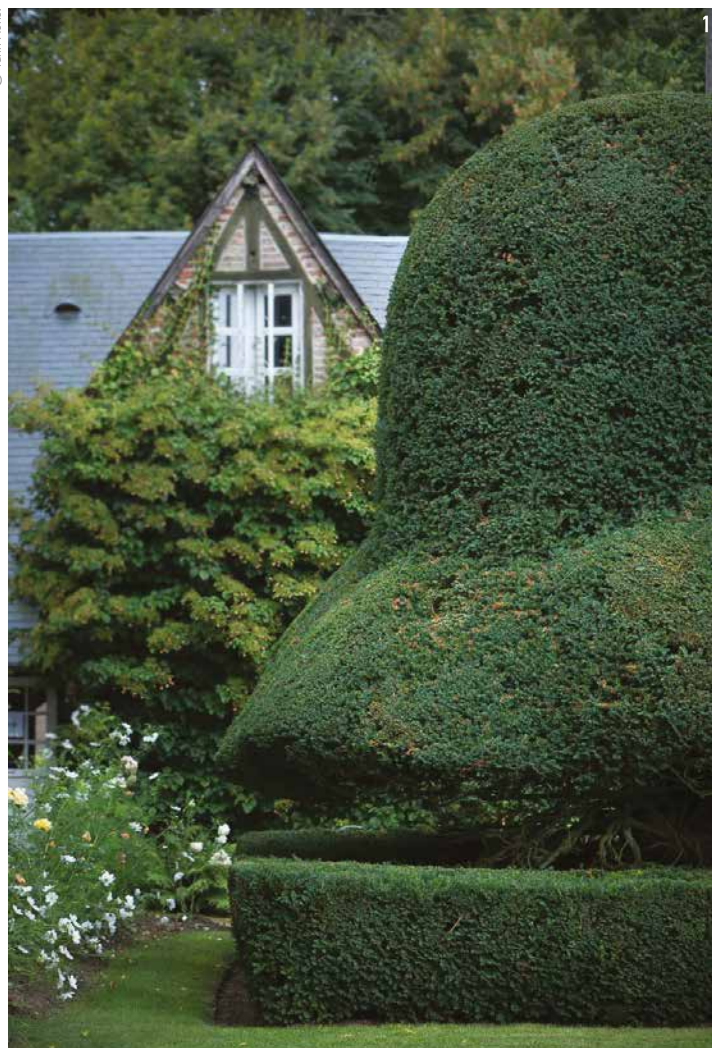
RAMBLING ROSES

1. A bright pink rose bush elegantly tumbles over an old wall.
2. Foliage rules the village, climbing its way over most of the buildings.

FULL BLOOM

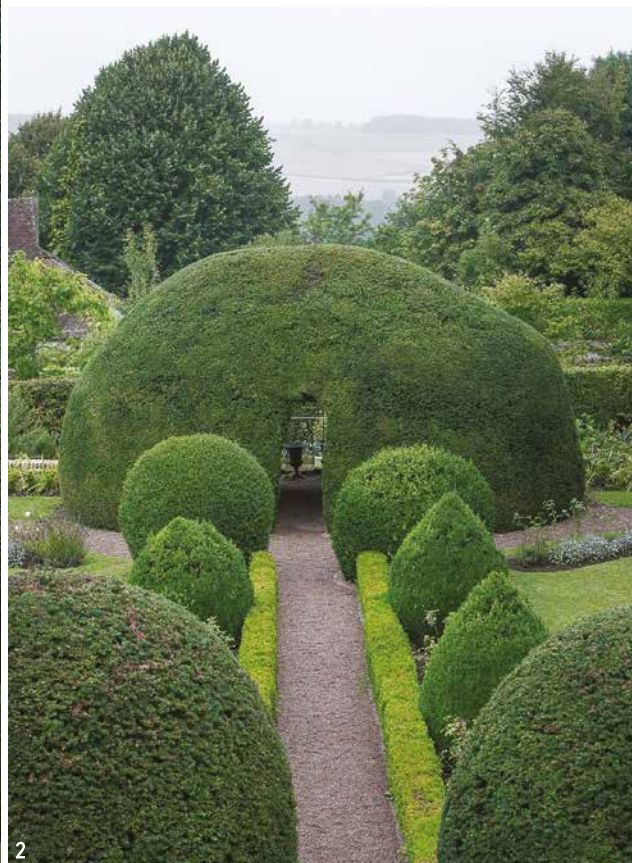
1. Detail of a blooming red rose.
2. Flowers make for a pretty contrast against the timber-framed houses.
3. With its giant, rose-colored doors, this old property with a farm annex is one of Gerberoy's memorable locations.





CURIOSER AND CURIOSER

1. The side of one of Ifs's giant bell-shaped yew topiary.
2. A view on the "Igloo" — awarded "Tree of the Year" in 2018.
3. Jardin des Ifs is situated right in the heart of Gerberoy.



Jardin des Ifs

A “*Jardin remarquable*” (“Remarkable garden”) in the heart of Gerberoy, Ifs — with its imposing wooden gate, cobbled courtyard and timbered barns — invites curiosity before you even set foot inside. Steeped in history, Jardin des Ifs (The Yew Tree Garden) is built around a house partially flanked by the old city walls that once belonged to the town’s governor.

The *jardin*’s collection of ancient yew trees has been pruned according to the strict rules of topiary art for over 400 years. Three of these are classified as “*Arbre Remarquable*” (“Remarkable Tree”), including the magnificent “Igloo” — awarded “Tree of the Year” in 2018. The garden’s neat lines, manicured lawn and diminutive size are offset by the giant eclectic dome and bell-shaped topiary.

This Renaissance gem holds a rosarium with over 300 varieties of antique, modern and botanic roses as well as a *potager* that supplies the on-site restaurant, a special setting for a tea or light lunch created by chef-gardener Odile Hennebert, with fresh fruits and vegetables.

The property has been handed from family to family since the 17th century. Today, it is the Higonnets that continue to prune it to perfection. 🌿

A WHIMSICAL SETTING

1. Jardin des Ifs has a pretty restaurant with tables laid out in the courtyard.
2. The art of topiary has been practiced in the garden for over 400 years.

