Les Rochers du Carnaval – ‘Carnaval’ Rocks

An exceptional place to visit

Although it is situated amongst private lands, this site is accessible to the public.

• Follow the trail !
  This trail is marked and maintained, allowing year round access.
  Trail length: approximately 0.3 miles (550 meters)
• Optimal wild flower viewing season: May and June

Follow the guide !
Guided tours may be reserved for groups upon request to ‘Guides en Morvan’:
www.guidesenmorvan.com

A French natural heritage jewel to be preserved

The ‘Carnaval Rocks’ natural site has been designated a ‘classified site’ on July 28, 1940. This is a strong regulatory protection, which guarantees the conservation of individual sites of exceptional interest. State conservancy services are the attentive stewards of Natural Heritage sites that are representative of rich and diverse French landscapes.

The remarkable biodiversity within this unique natural environment is sensitive. We thank you for being respectful and leave only footprints, so as to preserve this site for the benefit of future generations.

A few guidelines to respect

• So as not to disrupt the livestock, do not go past the pasture fencing. Dogs are welcome in the park providing they are on a leash at all times.
• For your safety, do not climb on the rock formations.
• On warm sunny days, be mindful of vipers sunning themselves near rocks.
• Part of this site is shared with soaring sports enthusiasts (paragliding and hang gliding). Thank you for respecting the practice space dedicated to these pastimes.

Otherwise similar the rest of the Morvan region, the Uchon granite massif hides at its heart curious geological formations that are an unusual sight in Burgundy and a rarity in France: granite ‘chaos’.

Follow the marked trail and discover strange blocks of rounded rock piles, with their peculiar shapes defying balance. The end of this trail, passing through exceptional natural viewpoints, leads you to an awe inspiring view point over the Arroux bocage valley and the Morvan range.

Let the beautiful and magical appeal of this site move you !

Acidic moorland: a realm for Scotch broom and Heather

On both sides of the trail, Scotch broom and Heather moors dominate.

This natural milieu, typical of Morvan, is rare elsewhere in Burgundy. Plants found here are characteristic of acidic granite soils, which are especially dry and nutrient poor.

If you stop for a while, you may be in luck and catch a sight of the ‘Lulu’ lark.

Professional photograph: G. Doucet - CEN Bourgogne

To learn more about nature in Burgundy: www.bourgogne-franche-comte-nature.fr

This trail is marked and maintained, allowing year round access.

Follow the marked trail and discover the typical granite ‘chaos’ formations, inspired by their shape.
Granite ‘chaos’ or granite piles stand before you as if dropped in place by magic. But they are in fact the result of a history going back 300 million years, that of erosion of solid rock originating in the primary geological era. Over millennia, frost and temperature fluctuations deepen natural cracks in the granite rocks to lead to eventual breaks and block release. Rainwater is then able to infiltrate and slowly dissolve granite into a type of sand named ‘granite arena’. As these sands drain to the surrounding lower areas, granite blocks gain prominence as sculptures shaped by nature.

More recently, ‘Cricket arena’, a unique charm of Morvan landscapes, are granite piles dotted over the ‘chaos’. They once again played an important role in the rich ecology of this site and foster plant species that are specifically adapted to these conditions.

Acidic grasslands: who goes there?

Encircling the ‘chaos’ and along the discovery loop, low grasslands lay under your feet: these are acidic moors. They play a big role in the rich ecology of this site and foster plant species that are specifically adapted to these conditions.

Landscape etched by history

The top of ‘Carnaval’ Rocks opens over a landscape sculpted by spring and rain water erosion of granite rocks, by tectonic shifts, as well as by human activity over millennia. In the Morvan near Autun, prairies were once more spread out. Land parcels are still delineated by low hedges with interspersed oak trees forming what is termed a bocage. The evolution of agricultural practices and a move away from agriculture have led to a gradual reforestation of slopes as well as some prairies and moors. More recently, forestry plantations have accelerated this phenomenon. Darker green patches show up softwood plantations dotted over the landscape.

A fine balance between nature and human activity

Although natural, the evolution of vegetation encroaching on open sites endangers the ecologically valuable species that predominate such environments. Without protective intervention, this very site would become fully forested within a couple of decades!

Rich diversity of the Morvan forest

The ‘Carnaval’ Rocks site is surrounded by forest. Oak, beech, hornbeam and birch trees can all adapt to poor, dry and acidic soils to grow naturally on the Uchon massif.

Chestnut trees, thought to have been introduced by the Romans, appear to have thrived in this area! Deciduous forests, a unique charm of Morvan landscapes, are slowly being replaced by softwood plantations due to economic interests. Unfortunately, softwood forests do not favour biodiversity.

Woodpeckers: adapted to a life in trees

Woodpecker feet consist of two sets of two opposing claws, which allow them to grip and climb tree trunks. They hammer with their strong beak to defend their territory, or to seek delicious insects through the tree bark.

To preserve the ecological value of ‘Carnaval’ Rocks, the ‘Conservatoire d’espaces naturels de Bourgogne’ (Bourgundy natural spaces Conservancy) owns part of the lands and actively manages the entire site since 1996, in partnership with other private owners, local partners and State services. Ancient customs, once used to manage grasslands, are applied regularly at this site and include selective tree felling, removal of shrubs as well as grazing by livestock. These approaches allow for the maintenance of open grasslands and moors so that all of us can enjoy the ‘chaos’ and their surrounding landscape for many years to come.