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vers les cultures européennes

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## NANTES IN EUROPE

A square called "Petite Hollande", a statue of Henry the Navigator (Prince of Portugal), the tomb of a Duke of Brittany made in Carrara marble, an Edict of Toleration that brought an end to the long period of religious wars that divided Europe... Nantes Métropole has had a European dimension for several centuries.

Nantes, the city of Aristide Briand (the French politician who won the Nobel Peace Prize), is first and foremost a port open to the world, with a flow of people coming in and another one going out. A port is a gateway and Nantes is one of Europe's Atlantic gateways. Throughout its history, the encounters between communities coming from different horizons have found expression, depending on the periods, in peaceful coexistence, periods of integration, rejection or wars. Although located on the Atlantic coast, the city is nevertheless very much at the heart of a Europe based on exchanges and sharing, thanks to the human ties woven over the course of many centuries.

This visit provides an ideal opportunity to resituate the city's activity in its European context, inextricably linked with its history as well as its current social, cultural and economic development. Here then is a panorama of European Nantes, open to the world...



### 1 CHÂTEAU DES DUCS DE BRETAGNE

Visitors to the History of Nantes Museum, located in the Château, can see considerable evidence of the role played in Europe by the port of Nantes. Moreover, some historians claim that Nantes was Europe's leading port in 1704. The Museum proudly displays a painting by William Turner. In 1826, the famous English painter embarked on a journey along the River Loire from Nantes to Orleans. He took advantage of this voyage of discovery to make numerous studies of the city and the banks of the Loire. In April 1598 in Nantes, King Henri IV of France signed an edict authorising the Protestant religion in France. The Edict of Nantes marked the end of the religious wars that divided Europe in the 16th century, opposing Catholics and partisans of the Reformation.

### 2 CATHEDRAL

In the south transept of the cathedral, there is the tomb of François II, the last Duke of Brittany, made in Italian marble. Its design was inspired by the Italian Renaissance, which had a significant impact across Europe. At the entrance of the choir, there is an 18th-century crucifix brought to Nantes from Catalonia, while the angels that crown the high altar were the work of the German sculptor Sébastien Leysner. The north transept houses the cenotaph of General Lamoricière who hailed from Nantes. He offered his services to Pope Pius IX in 1860 at the time of Italian unification.



### 3 EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE 1 rue Du Guesclin

The *Centre culturel européen* was originally a Franco-German cultural centre opened in 1993, followed in turn by the Franco-Spanish, Franco-Italian and Franco-British centres. In addition to its role as a documentation centre, it is a vehicle for discovering European cultures: you can learn the languages of the countries represented, take theatre lessons, take part in debates...

### 4 ÎLE FEYDEAU AND PLACE DE LA PETITE HOLLANDE

Figurehead of the Île Feydeau, Petite Hollande Square has been a busy thoroughfare since the 18th century. At that time, Nantes was home to the first Dutch colony in the Kingdom of France. Dutch ship owners and merchants provided their technical knowledge and expertise in a wide range of fields the most visible of which remains many examples of the "grill" construction method. Used to building on soft soil, the Dutch introduced this technique to the people of Nantes, enabling the Île Feydeau to be divided up into plots. Many of the mascarons on the buildings in port areas of Nantes were inspired by ancient mythology. It is not unusual to come across Neptune, god of the sea, Aeolus, ruler of the winds, or Mercury, god of trade. On the other side of the *ancien bras de l'Hôpital* (a quay) there is a private mansion, the *Hôtel Deurbroucq*, at "quai" number 6 of the



Île Gloriette, is named after a Dutch merchant, Dominique Deurbroucq, consul in 1758. His son, Pierre-Jean, was the captain of the Guard of Honour that greeted Napoleon on his visit to Nantes in 1808 and he was later made *Chevalier de l'Empire*. This fact underlines the extent to which foreign communities have integrated into the local community.

### 5 PLACE DU COMMERCE

The statue erected over twenty years ago in the square represents the Portuguese Prince, Henry the Navigator (1394–1460). He discovered and explored the coasts of West Africa. At the outset, the state thought it had had a statue of Magellan built in Nantes... Even though he never set foot in Nantes, the actual identity of the Prince was a reminder to the local populace of the city's proud sailing past. The Portuguese became the first Europeans to use the triangular trading system. Towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Nantes started slave shipping. It also based a large part of its wealth on the triangular trading becoming Europe's second largest slave ship port in Europe.



### 6 PLACE DE LA BOURSE

Richard Wallace (London 1818 – Neuilly 1890) was a knowledgeable art lover and a staunch Francophile who began using his fortune in 1870 for the benefit of Parisians, consequently becoming a very popular figure. He then had the idea of building “50 fontaines à boire” with their statues being made by Charles Auguste Lebourg, a sculptor from Nantes. There are five Wallace fountains in Nantes today. In stark contrast to the benevolent attitude of Richard Wallace, the statue of Colonel de Villebois-Mareuil is a reminder of the armed conflict between the French and the English during the Colonial Wars.

### 7 QUAI DE LA FOSSE

Before Nantes was bombed in 1943, the “*Maison des tourelles*” was located at the end of the new *rue De-Lattre-de-Tassigny*. Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it had belonged to the Ruiz family whose ancestors came from Burgos. This was one of the most important families in the imposing Spanish community in the city. A Spanish consul arrived in 1430 and links with the Iberian Peninsula developed rapidly. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nantes and Bilbao formed a trading association and introduced regular lines between the two ports. The Spaniards integrated into the local community to such an extent that in 1566 the second Mayor of Nantes was Yves Rocaz whose family had arrived a century earlier. Nowadays, there are several regular lines between France and Spain from the Loire estuary. Since 1976, a line has linked Montoir-de-Bretagne and Vigo, in Galicia, used for the transport of PSA cars. Applying a concept of the European Union Transport Policy, a sea motorway linking the large seaport of Nantes - Saint-Nazaire with the port of Gijon opened in September 2010. A further sign of the fast-developing relations between France and the Iberian countries saw Jean Nicot, the French ambassador to Portugal send the first oranges (and probably tobacco) to the court of France in 1560.



### 8 COURS CAMBRONNE

Pierre Cambronne (1770 – 1842) was a citizen of Nantes who joined up to fight in a battalion of the French Army in 1792. He fought throughout Europe. After becoming a General in Napoleon's Army, he took part in the Russian campaign. Despite being taken prisoner by the English during the Battle of Waterloo, he ended up returning to Nantes... where he married Mary Osburn, a Scottish woman...



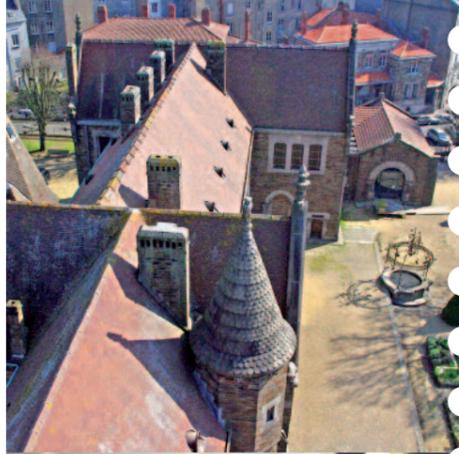
### 9 PLACE GRASLIN

A number of artists from Nantes had won the Prix de Rome, a scholarship enabling them to go to Italy in order to perfect their art during a period of study. This was the case of Mathurin Crucy, overseer of the city's architecture at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One of his most important projects saw the development of the *Quartier Graslin*. When he set about designing the theatre, Crucy sought to recreate a genuine ancient temple. Behind the theatre, in rue Scribe, stands *La Danse*, a group sculpted in 1981 by the Portuguese sculptor Charles Correia, who lived in Nantes.



### 10 MUSÉE DOBRÉE 18 rue Voltaire

The Dobrée family, hailing from Normandy and exiled in Guernsey in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century due to their being Protestants, proved to be very successful in the



field of international trade. They settled in Nantes at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today the Dobrée Museum is located on the land Thomas Dobrée sold to the Department in 1895. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Dobrée family bought this estate bearing the name “The domain of the Irish”. The manor had indeed provided a refuge for Irish priests hounded out of their own country.

### 11 COSMOPOLIS

Cosmopolis, which comes from the Greek *cosmo* (world) and *polis* (city), is an international cultural centre financed by the Nantes City Council. It also provides the general public with the opportunity to discover different cultures from the world over by organising exhibitions, special events and lectures.



### 12 PLACE ARISTIDE-BRIAND

Born in Nantes (see the name plate in *Place Bretagne*), Aristide Briand spent his childhood in Saint-Nazaire and continued his education in Nantes before completing his studies in Paris. Deputy for the Department of the Loire (Saint-Etienne), then Loire-Inférieure (Nantes), he was the *rapporteur* for the law that separated the Church and the State in 1905. He went on to become a Minister twenty-three times, with eleven spells as President of the Council of Ministers. Outraged by the First World War, he was committed to the idea of a “United States of Europe” being created. He was the driving force behind the creation of the League of Nations (SDN), and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926 for his work with Gustav Stresemann, his German counterpart as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Aristide Briand died in 1932. The statue, sculpted by Jacques Raoult, was officially unveiled in Nantes in 2005: it shows Aristide Briand pointing at the 12 stars of the European flag.



### 13 CCO

Every year 50,000 people visit the *Centre de communication de l'Ouest* (CCO) covering some 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> and standing at the foot of the *Tour Bretagne*. Open to all audiences, the CCO has the official task presenting Western France, showcasing the players of the local economic fabric and providing a platform for discussing local projects. The CCO showcases the regional economy enabling the general public to discover the European dimension of companies and the international appeal of the area. Furthermore, the CCO is a club made up of just under 1,000 decision-makers who meet each other there to exchange their ideas and share their combined experience, indicating good practices during special events on a wide variety of themes.



### 14 CONFISERIE BOHU'S MOSAICS 26 rue de la Marne

Throughout the city some shop fronts are covered with mosaics, most of which date back to the 1920s and 1930s. The one in *Rue de la Marne* was made by the workshop of the Italian mosaic artist, Isidore Odorico.



### 15 CIED

**33 rue de Strasbourg, Maison de l'Europe**  
The *Centre d'information Europe direct* provides a link between the European Union and its citizens. It provides all the free publications concerning Europe and deals with such issues as building Europe and the possibilities of obtaining grants to study in Europe.



### 16 NANTES PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

After having been the first town to have its own public transport network, thanks to the ingenious Stanislas Baudry and his horse-drawn omnibuses, the town council innovated in 1879 by building the first tram network to use compressed air as a means of traction. The system was invented by Louis Mekarski, a Polish engineer. The Nantes conurbation was the first in France to have a modern tram system that started running in 1985. With the development of the Line 3 terminus at Marcel-Paul, the network now covers some 42 kilometres. Line 4 has respected a sustainable development. It operates as a Busway®, and runs on natural vehicle gas, thus contributing with the Navibus to the fine reputation of the Tan network (113 million passengers in 2010). The trams, partly built in France and Germany, will be completed with new Spanish trams.