

EDITORIAL

Conflans-Sainte-Honorine invites you explore the old town on foot and discover its history and heritage.

The town was built on the riverside many centuries ago and developed during the Middle Ages thanks to the pilgrimages to celebrate Sainte Honorine and the right to levy river tolls. During the Industrial Revolution the town became France's inland waterway capital. Explore its remarkable architectural heritage and let yourself be captivated by its numerous lovely vantage points.

ENJOY YOUR STROLL !

Laurent Brosse

Mayor - Conflans-Sainte-Honorine
Regional vice-président - Communauté urbaine Grand Paris Seine & Oise
Councillor - Département des Yvelines

Starting from the Place Fouillièrre follow the arrows on the ground which will guide you for the entire visit.

Proceed to Saint Maclou's church



THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN

The name, 'Conflans Sainte Honorine', derives from the geography of the town, as it is the confluence of two rivers, the Seine and the Oise, and also from the name of its patron saint, 'Honorine'. In 876 the fortress of Conflans offered sanctuary to the monks transporting the relics of Saint Honorine in order to escape the Vikings. The presence of a priory linked to the early economic development of the town has also been documented since the Middle Ages, certainly favoured for its important strategic situation at the junction of the three bishoprics, Paris, Rouen and Chartres.

THE INLAND WATERWAY ACTIVITY AT CONFLANS AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

A text dating from 1586 confirms that inland shipping was a source of business for the town. Local lords systematically levied tolls on passing vessels.

In the 17th century when river transport leading upstream to Paris gained in importance, the town became a strategic location for boats changing from their upstream right bank route to their downstream left bank route.

Conflans acquired a privileged place in river commerce. Minerals from the north of France as well as agricultural produce and construction materials were the main payloads shipped to Paris. From the ports of Le Havre and Rouen came Scandinavian and American wood, Italian and Spanish wines, cereals, and from 1890 onwards, hydrocarbons.

CHAIN BOAT NAVIGATION AND STEAM TUGS

To tow barges more efficiently, new techniques were perfected during the 19th Century destined to replace the use of towpaths requiring manpower or working animals.

Chain boat navigation consists of using a leading chain boat reliant on a submerged chain and a steam driven winch to tow other boats. This technique was employed in 1855. The first steamboat tug pulling a train of barges appeared in 1866.

CONFLANS - AN INLAND WATERWAY TOWN

The town was a river staging post until the 1920's when the diesel engine with its greater range of distance made its appearance. Nevertheless, the barge communities had elected Conflans as their stopping point of choice and have never left it. This is due largely to the presence of inland waterway institutions.

As early as 1905 Albery Morillon created the 'Enfance batelière' charity. In 1921 the charity bought the Théméricourt Château situated on the bank above the Seine to create a boarding school for the sons of mariners. It opened in 1924. Then in 1936, the abbot, Joseph Bellanger, created the mariners' social service office destined to help the river pilots with their administrative procedures, as this category of worker has no fixed abode. The head office was set up on a concrete barge purchased and fitted by Bellanger's association; as well as offices, a meeting room and a chapel were incorporated. The chapel is still accessible today and open all day long. It is situated by the Quai de la République.

You are now at the Montjoie Tower

THE MONTJOIE TOWER

The tower, which takes its name from the latin 'Mons Jovis' or 'Jupiter's Mount', is a key feature of old Conflans. It was built in stone at the end of the 11th century by the Count of Beaumont replacing its wooden predecessor, following conflicts with the Montmorency family.

It is the oldest tower in the Paris region and its four walls are still well preserved. The colour of locally extracted grey limestone adds to the sobriety of the edifice built on regular foundations. Three double bay windows situated centrally, two facing west and one facing south, underline the residential status of the tower. The narrow ventilation slits or embrasures at the lower level, give way to semi-circular bays (16) at the middle and upper levels. The nobler living quarters were heated by two fire places situated on the median level and one on the upper level. Their flues were built into the walls.

The Montjoie Tower was partially restored in 1979-80. Its original appearance was recovered by unblocking the blocked bays.

Putlog holes, used to support scaffolding during its construction and prop marks reinforcing the west wall in the 19th century are also visible.



THE CASTLE OF THE PRIORY

Very few elements of the former priory are visible today apart from the 'Grand Cellier', or Great Cellar (13th c.), which houses the leisure boat collection belonging to the Inland Waterways Shipping Museum (Musée de la batellerie et des voies navigables), the Cherub's Cellar, and a 14th c. cellar turned into an ice house in the early 1800's., all of which are distributed in the park. The priory was a major location for pilgrimages. The church bore a bell tower above the crossing of the transept and its facade was flanked by two towers. The foundation of the former south tower is visible in the Cherub's Cellar, which takes its name from a face sculpted on a corbel (an architectural supporting feature).

The domain of the priory was sold after the Revolution and turned into a countryside resort from which the view of the Seine is unique. The Lhéritier de Chézelles family brought life back to the property in 1808. First Frédéric demolished two obsolete service wings, then refurbished the priory house and added two gables (Empire style) giving on to the garden. Then Samuel landscaped part of the park and planted exotic tree species. In 1840 Marguerite Fardel built the Orangerie which now hosts exhibitions.

In 1864, Jules Gévelot, the director of the French munitions company in Issy-les-Moulineaux and later mayor of Conflans 1871-1881, inherited the still modest edifice and handed it over to the architect, Alexandre Laplanche, for major alterations. He closed the space between the two gables on the garden side and added another wing that he joined to the existing building via a vault. A finely decorated glass-house with friezes and cast-iron columns was introduced in 1888. The castle and the park were bought by the town in 1931.

Enter the Priory park



THE INLAND WATERWAYS SHIPPING MUSEUM

Since 1966, the museum has occupied the northern wing of the castle built by Jules Gévelot.

Created in 1965 under the initiatives of both the journalist and the Conflans citizen, Louise Weiss, later to become a European Member of Parliament, and Georges-Henri Rivière who was the curator of the museum of Popular Arts and Traditions, the museum became a venue of national interest due to the wealth of its collections and the originality of its exhibits.

The museum also provides a broad range of events including temporary exhibitions (in the Orangerie), participation in the 'Museums by Night' celebrations (La nuit des Musées) and the European Heritage Days.

Opening times

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday : 10:00 - 12:00 / 14:00 - 17:00

Wednesday and Friday : 14:00 - 17:30

Groups from Monday to Sunday - by appointment.

Telephone : 01 34 90 39 50

Tickets : full rate : 5 euros / reduced rates : 3 euros / 2 euros / 1.50 euros





The viewing point from the Gévelot terrace.

AN ORIGINAL NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Situated on the right bank of a bend in the Seine and opposite the Saint-Germain-en-Laye forest, Conflans was built on a limestone spur 25 meters above the river. This limestone spur has challenged the movement of inhabitants in and around the town. The streets running parallel to the river, linked by stairways and closed to traffic, link the lower and upper reaches of the town.

The limestone hillside next to the Seine was mined to extract a particularly robust dimension stone called « banc royal ». This quality of stone was used significantly in the construction of large Parisian monuments following the closure of the quarries in the capital 1776. As a result, the Concorde Square (place de la Concorde), the Panthéon, the Paris East Station (Gare de l'Est) and the statues of France's illustrious men at the Louvre are partly made up of Conflans stone.



CONFLANS - A HEALTH RESORT

At the beginning of the 19th century health authorities encouraged city dwellers to take advantage of the countryside's fresh air. Numerous resorts then developed in and around the Paris region.

The arrival of the railway at the end of the 19th century generalized this trend and also fuelled property development. At the beginning of the 20th century the wealthy built their houses on high ground as well as on the banks of the Seine. Other more modest properties were built in and around the town.

You are now
at the river quayside.

PORT SAINT NICOLAS

Since the 1990's the town authorities have developed numerous means along the riverbanks to welcome mariners retiring in the area. Port Saint Nicolas features some fifty boats of all types from all periods, similar to an open-air museum. Every year since 1959 the 'Pardon National' has been celebrated. This festive celebration, both patriotic and religious, pays homage to those mariners who gave their lives during the 1st and 2nd World Wars by re-lighting the flame of the Arc de Triomphe and carrying it to the Memorial to the Dead monument in Conflans.



THE HERITAGE HALT

In 2001, the Association of the Friends of the Inland Waterway Shipping Museum, (Association des amis du Musée de la Batellerie, AAMB) obtained a berth for their boats (a crane pontoon, Le Jacques and Triton 25) directly below the museum: this is known as the « Halte patrimoine » of Port Saint Nicolas. A gangway and dolphins (mooring structures) were introduced to gain access to the boats via the pontoon crane (early 20th c). The Jacques, a river boat tug built in Creil (Oise region) in 1904, bought by the AAMB for one symbolic franc and restored, was classified as a historical monument in 1997. It is the last remaining example afloat of the famous « Guêpes » (Eng. « wasps ») tugs belonging to the « Chainboat and Tug Company » (Société Générale de Touage et Remorquage) whose head office and workshops were situated in Andrésy. The Triton 25, a pusher boat (UK) or towboat (USA) and 'ambassador' for the AAMB was ordered from the Carel and Fouché shipbuilders in Petite-Synthe (Nord region) by the Société de Reconstruction du Parc Fluvial or River Fleet Reconstruction Company as war reparations to replace the Triton 22 which was destroyed during the bombardments of Creil (Oise region) in 1944. Since its purchase in 1997 it has been preserved by the AAMB who also had it classified as a historical monument in 2021. It can be visited.

[Visit Triton 25](#)

Groups - Contact the Office de Tourism Intercommunal Seine et Oise at 01 30 74 60 65 or write to contact.oti.gpseo@gmail.com

References and bibliography: Texts by François Beudoïn, former curator of the Musée de la batellerie et des voies navigables Conflans-Sainte-Honorine. Terre de confluences, Roselyne Bussière Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, Conflans à travers les âges. Mémoire en Images, éditions Sutton Sainte Honorine, pèlerinage et prieuré de Conflans, Patrice Dupuy Le château du Prieuré et son parc, Josette Herry - Translation: Gregory Sayer

