

A - reception and administration
B - toilets

1- The palm house
is devoted to plants from humid tropical regions. Note the presence of epiphyte plants which grow on other plants, such as orchids and ferns. The greenhouse dates from 1895 and was fully restored between 1997 and 1999. Housing 2,000 species, this is one of the most remarkable collections in France.

2- The cactus house
contains 4,000 species of succulent plants (which have fleshy organs, rich in water) from dry tropical regions.

3- Medicinal plants

4- Plants of the Massif Armorican
with 1,500 species of wild origin.

5- Camellias

The Nantes area has become a conservatory of camellias, also known as "Japanese roses". The garden has a collection of 500 varieties.

5a : historic collection
of camellias introduced 1840-1850

5b - collection of camellias
bred by Nantes horticulturalists (Jules Verne camellias, etc...)

6- Hectot magnolia

The oldest tree in the gardens planted in 1807, it survived the terrible winter of 1879-1880 and has a circumference of 2.3 metres!

7- Maze and fountain

8- Landscape garden
considered by the Royal Horticultural Society to be one of the five best examples of a Victorian garden in Europe!

9- Arboretum.

Teaching collection of trees planted in families. 950 trees from Europe, America, Asia, etc.

10- Deer enclosure

Route n°2 {1h30}

Walks and gardens: between tradition and modernity

From the 18th century to the present day, the city has made space for walks and gardens, some reflecting history and tradition, some more modern in emphasis.

① Ile de Versailles a contemporary garden

The garden's layout, designed by the architect Dulieu and the landscape designer Soulard and completed in 1987, is inspired by the Japanese tradition, but with the addition of a contemporary touch. While the traditional Japanese garden is a place for meditation, the Ile de Versailles is a more public space.

Despite the island's small surface area, the variety of landscapes - waterfalls and rock gardens for mountains, areas of water with pebble beaches - and the maze of paths - intersected with little bridges and dotted with Japanese lanterns - creates an impressive effect.

The garden is planted with rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas and magnolias.

There are stands of bamboo and a variety of different trees: weeping willows and alders but also Japanese maples, flowering cherries, sequoia, bald cypresses, cedars. Cloud trees (pines pruned in the Japanese style) are a recurrent decorative element.

☞ Ceineray's plane trees

You will see several plane trees planted in about 1770, when JB. Ceineray, the city's architect, was building the Préfecture and laying out the quay. There are some 5,000 plane trees in the streets of Nantes, but the ones planted by Ceineray are undoubtedly the oldest.

② St Pierre - St André the Walks tradition

Two fortified keeps originally occupied the walks you see today. In the 18th century, plans were drawn up to expand the city: they envisaged large scale building programmes and the layout of wide walks and boulevards. Gérard Mellier, Mayor of Nantes, had the keep at Saint-Pierre demolished.

The walk was planted with elms and opened in 1726. Later on, Jean-Baptiste Ceineray, the city's chief architect, proposed extending the walk to the north along the Cours Saint-André (1763). The linked walks are separated by a vast rectangular square, with a statue of Louis XVI standing on a column. The walks were originally planted with elms and limes, but these trees were replaced in the 19th and 20th centuries with chestnuts and oaks.

A contemporary view: "There are six or seven public walks in Nantes[...]. The most

beautiful of all is the Cours des Etats, or Motte Saint Pierre[...]. It is ornamented with a grove of limes planted in staggered rows and four rows of elms, with seats at regular intervals. It offers admirable views: there is the Loire and the Prairie de Mauves, as far as the eye can see.[...] This is now a most popular walk, which may be compared with the famous boulevards of Paris."
M. Ogée, Dictionnaire de Bretagne, 1779

③ Porte Saint-Pierre the outline of an archaeological garden

In 1910, restoration and excavation work was begun: this enabled the revelation of the city's former ramparts (Gallo-Roman wall and mediaeval fortifications). Etienne Coutan, the city's landscape architect, created an "archaeological garden" to display these remains. On the east side, there are few trees or plants and the site is open to view. To the east of the gateway, a lawn and trees (Italian poplars, holm oaks and cedars) is protected by a "symbolic fence" a simple and very low iron rail.

Who was Etienne Coutan? Born in Nantes in 1875, a graduate of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he travelled extensively in Europe before becoming the city's landscape architect in 1911. He designed a number of

municipal buildings (public baths, schools, etc.) as well as gardens and parks (Maurice Schwob, Maquis de Saffré, JB Daviaux, Porte Saint-Pierre).

The Cathedral at the gates of the city

The first cathedral, built along the ramparts, provided symbolic protection for the mediaeval city. The building you see today, dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, was begun in 1434 by Jean V, Duke of Brittany. The façades and the nave in the Flamboyant Gothic style date from the 15th and 16th centuries. The later choir was not finished until 1893. However, despite taking 450 years to build, the cathedral retains a remarkable architectural unity.

④ The Jardin des Plantes a botanical garden

In 1805, Alexandre Hectot, an apothecary and botanist, began work on laying out the Jardin des Plantes. His successor, Doctor Ecorchard (1809-1882), a professor of botany, commissioned Antoine Noisette to design the extensions, in the landscape garden or English style. The new Jardin des Plantes was inaugurated in 1860 and opened to the public in 1865. Nantes has a long tradition of plant

conservation and also of introducing new species, brought from America, Asia and Africa. The mild climate and the chalk-free soils meant plants could adapt easily to their new situation.

The Jardin des Plantes is both a landscape garden open to the public and a teaching garden used for students of botany. It belongs to the 19th century tradition of botanical gardens, acting as a genuine conservatory for local or exotic plants, based on the collection principle.

What became of the Jardin des Apothicaires? The forerunner to the Jardin des Plantes, created in 1687, was on the site now occupied by Lycée Jules Verne. There, apothecaries grew the medicinal plants they needed for their preparations. In 1726, when the King commanded ships' captains to bring back all kinds of exotic plants from their voyages, the magnolia was introduced during the Enlightenment, and later became an emblem of the city of Nantes. The Jardin des Apothicaires, having become too cramped, was abandoned in favour of what is now the Jardin des Plantes. It was closed in 1877.

AU CŒUR DE LA VILLE

Laissez-vous conter
Nantes

PROMENADES VERTES





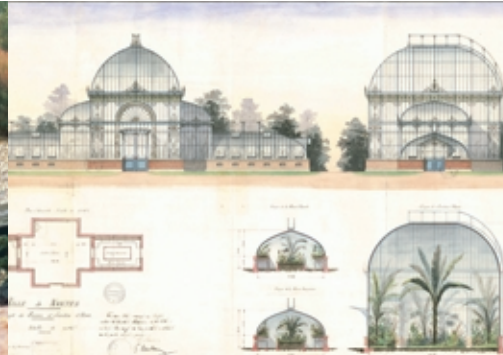
The Cours des Cinquante Otages



Cours St-Pierre et St-André / 1764



The Ile de Versailles



The Jardin des Plantes / 1895



Allée Duguay-Trouin

Route n° 1 Green spaces and reflections of water: memories of the river

Nantes, the “Venice of the West” bathed by the River Loire. This was the city’s image for centuries. But with the filling in of sections of the Loire and the Erdre (1926-1940), the historic centre turned away from its river. Recently, landscaping projects in the city centre have renewed links with the past. Green spaces and reflections of water are bringing the river’s memory once more to the fore.

1 The Castle of the Dukes of Brittany The moat once again filled with water

When it was built, the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany was surrounded by the Loire. In the 18th century, in the absence of military threat, the moat was drained. Then, when sections of the river were filled in, the castle lost all contact with the Loire. After the War, the moat was filled with water once more to restore

the building’s original defensive appearance. The ditches, planted with ash, are laid to grass. To the west, on the site of the former Spanish Tower, a row of bamboo follows the original lines of the foundations. Note, on the north side, two centennial *Pterocarya reberiana* unique in Nantes.

The castle of the Dukes of Brittany was more than just a fortress protected by a deep moat; right from the start it was the Duke’s residence and from the 18th century, a garrison. From 2006, the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany will house the city’s historical museum.

Square Elisa Mercœur the fountain (1993)

With this work, the Nantais sculptor Eric Fonteneau wished to produce a “lively, happy and joyful work”. The water shoots out of figures suspended in the air forming a sort of children’s dance. The translucent colours of the animals and people depicted

2 The Allée Turenne the river rediscovered

In 1991, a major urban project permitted a new look at the landscaping of the Ile Feydeau. As a reminder that this district was once encircled by branches of the Loire, Italo Rota and his team designed a new landscape layout for the “Green Island”. The Allée Turenne is now covered with lawns and beds of heather in linked geometric shapes. These “green streams” symbolise the water. The granite avenues recall the old landing stages used by the ships.

The Ile Feydeau was originally divided into plots in 1723, when the city was experiencing unprecedented growth. The first buildings date from the 1740s. These grand houses belonged to wealthy bourgeois families (shipowners and merchants). The façades are

adorned with a wide diversity of sculptures and wrought iron.

3 Square Jean-Baptiste Daviais (or Square de la Petite Hollande)

Lying to the west of Feydeau, the Place de la Petite Hollande was a covered market in the 19th century. Following the filling in of the river and the demolition of the market hall, there was some debate about the future of this vast esplanade. Finally, the plan designed by Etienne Coutan, the city’s landscape architect, was adopted in 1932. The clumps of trees are planted to set off the 18th century façades (Hôtel de Villestreux, Hôtel Grou...). The sunken garden is designed to offer a viewpoint on the landscape without masking the perspectives. A major innovation for the period: the garden is unfenced, like the open gardens of Germany.

Anecdote: when it was opened in 1934, the garden was intended exclusively for the use of children and their mothers.

4 The Cours des Cinquante Otages the landscaping project by Italo Rota and his team (1993)

When the city centre was having a new tramline built, restoration of the public spaces in the Cours des Cinquante Otages was entrusted to Italo Rota and his team. The Cours (or walk), prohibited to cars and lorries, was completely transformed. Firstly, public transport and secondly, pedestrian areas were made a priority. The planting of lime trees and *Magnolia grandiflora* accompanied the restoration. The older plane trees were retained to provide a pleasant ambience. Before it was filled in and diverted, the Erdre, a tributary of the

Loire, followed the modern Cours des Cinquante Otages. As a reminder of this, the Italo Rota team included a “river” of plants formed by a succession of beds with conical evergreen magnolias, shrubs pruned into the shape of balls and seasonal plantings.

5 The Ile de Versailles revisiting the memory of the Erdre

The Ile de Versailles was once a populous, industrial district. After several decades of neglect, the island was finally restored as a resolutely contemporary Japanese garden. And yet the past has not been completely erased. So, among the rock gardens and exotic plants, in the centre of the Zen garden, the “Maison de l’Erdre” displays the island’s history and its river heritage. There are descriptions of local aquatic plants and wildlife and the history of human activity (laundry boats, tanneries, barges). To echo Japanese tradition the “Maison de l’Erdre” is designed as a Japanese tea house.

Opening times for Nantes gardens
Winter: 8.30 am - 5.30 pm. Spring and autumn 8.30 am - 6.30 pm. Summer 8.30 am - 8 pm

Jardin des Plantes
Line 1 SNCF station stop
Bd Stalingrad

Ile de Versailles
Line 2 Saint-Mihiel stop
Maison de l’Erdre
Winter weekdays, 11.30 am-5.45 pm
weekends and public holidays
10 am-12 noon/2.45-5.30 pm
Spring, summer, autumn weekdays
11.30 am-5.45 pm weekends and public
holidays 10 am-12 noon / 3-5.45 pm

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