



Île de Versailles

A Japanese garden, a house dedicated to the Erdre



Collections and landscapes

Inside the island, composed of plants from the banks of the Erdre, a Japanese garden is unveiled. This tea garden takes all the traditional composition principles. The tea house is now home to the Maison de l'Erdre and has a dry garden at its heart, another Japanese garden tradition.

The island's outline: plants from the banks of the Erdre

The Erdre valley is home to both native plants and exotic plants, which are now perfectly acclimatised. Ash trees, weeping willows and alders have long grown alongside the Erdre. Loosestrifes, yellow irises and water-archers co-exist on the banks. Bald cypresses and sequoias from America were planted from the XVIIIth century. Certain exotic plants have developed over time into invasive plants. This is the case of the water-primrose, which captures all light to the point that it eliminates all other species. It is now pulled out during annual campaigns along the Erdre valley.

Why is there a Japanese-style garden on the île de Versailles?

Suggested by the team of Jacques Dulieu, architect, and Louis Soulard, landscaper, the Japanese garden's advantage is that it makes small spaces look bigger. It also enables heather soil plants to be emphasised, plants that are well-acclimatised to Nantes's temperate climate. This exotic garden is also in keeping with the tradition of the voyages that were made from the city.

The tea garden or chaniwa

The origin of the tea garden is in the contemplative gardens in Zen temples. It is an enclosed garden which reveals itself as you walk through it. The covered gallery guides you towards the tea house where the tea ceremony takes place. A traditional ritual, it enables a small group of guests to drink tea prepared by a master of this art.



The île de Versailles: from the marsh to the Japanese garden

A place for relaxation and leisure since it was developed by the Dulieu-Soulard team in 1987, the île de Versailles was originally a marsh. In order to lay out the Nantes to Brest canal, work to clear the river saw the island created in 1831. It was then the headquarters of several small craft businesses: ship builders and repairers, mechanics, etc. These businesses fell into decline from the 1950s onwards. The heart of the island is home to a Japanese-inspired tea garden. It reveals to walkers landscapes which are renewed step by step and as the

seasons progress. Based in the traditional tea house, the Maison de l'Erdre, there is an opportunity to discover the plants and fish which live in the Erdre, with around twenty fish species in aquariums. Nantes' sailing and water sports activities are based around the island. The quays are very busy as soon as the sun comes out, even more so at the end of August and start of September when music lovers who have come to the Rendez-vous de l'Erdre jazz festival take over the banks.

The scroll composition

The Japanese garden is a series of landscapes which are scrolled through using the art of miegakure, or «hide and reveal», using hedges and fences. These represent miniature natural landscapes, mainly mountain landscapes. Three elements make up these landscapes: plants, minerals and water.

The mineral elements

The rocks, which are home to the spirits, or kami in Shinto tradition, are often placed in threes: the large rock represents the sky, the medium sized rock man and the small rock the earth. Moss and lichen cover them over time. Pebbles are used to recall mountain streams.

revealed. Flowers are only present individually and never in large groups: azaleas, rhododendrons or daylilies flower in spring.

Animals

There are animals here but they keep themselves to themselves: ducks, water fowl and koi carp live in the pool near the tea house.

The plant species

There are many pine trees, which symbolise longevity, cherry trees which mark the temporary nature of life and maples. They are cut into clouds and flat shapes, which gives them an elegant bearing and enables visitors to see through them. Bamboo is used for the hedges behind which the landscape is

The dry garden or karesansui

At the centre of the tea house there is a meditative garden as is usually found in Shinto monasteries. Constructed almost entirely from minerals, it encourages self-reflection. The sand symbolises the sea, with the ripples of the water, the waves, rocks and islands regularly drawn.

The symbolic elements

The garden is decorated with lanterns, gata and tachi-gata. The portal, torii, is painted red, a colour which symbolises life and keeps bad spirits away. It separates the sacred enclosure from the profane section of the garden and traditionally provides a pathway to the temple.



What else the park has to offer

Historical route

The quays around the island feature a historic interpretation route using old photos to present the history of the island and the business that was conducted along the Erdre. A leaflet "Laissez-vous conter le quartier Hauts Pavés Saint Félix" explaining the history of this district is also available.

Harbour master's office

Providing the entrance to Brittany's canals and waterways, the Erdre harbour master's office is open all year round. It provides all the services expected by sailors: mooring, nautical information, weather forecasts, water, electricity and fuel supplies and tank emptying.

Educational activities

Nearly 3,000 school pupils visit the île de Versailles each year. On the agenda: learning about the river's ecology, its fauna and flora, but also discovery of the Japanese garden.

Temporary exhibitions

All year round the Maison de l'Erdre has temporary exhibitions which are updated regularly.

Festivals and other events

The île de Versailles hosts numerous festivals and other events, including the Rendez-vous de l'Erdre jazz festival which attracts over 150,000 spectators at the start of September each year. Local Japanese associations also organise their traditional festivals here

Canoe, kayak and electric boat hire

You can sail along the Erdre by hiring canoes, kayaks and electric boats from April to October.

Cycle and foot path

There are over 38 kilometres of walking and cycling paths upstream of the Erdre. The island is also a stage on the «Nantes Cœur» walking circuit which takes walkers to the Jardin des plantes, the city's botanical garden. For more information, see the walking guide «Nantes Métropole à pieds», published by the Fédération Française de randonnée, the French hiking federation.

Services

For visitors, a restaurant is open at lunchtimes during the week, as well as a bar in the marquee during the summer. Children's games are available, protected by a stone wall.

Special attractions

The île de Versailles provides a window to the history of the Erdre and its many changes. First channelled nearly 15 centuries ago, the river has long been a communication and economic growth channel. It also features a very rich ecosystem which gets right into the heart of the city. Here is a look at the extraordinary elements from the past and the present that can be found.

The chaussée de Barbin

In 550 the bishop Saint Félix of Nantes had the chaussée de Barbin built 100 metres downstream from the current Motte Rouge bridge. This work raised the level of the Erdre and enabled boats to sail down it. It became a vector for economic and urban development.

The Nantes follies and châteaux of the Erdre

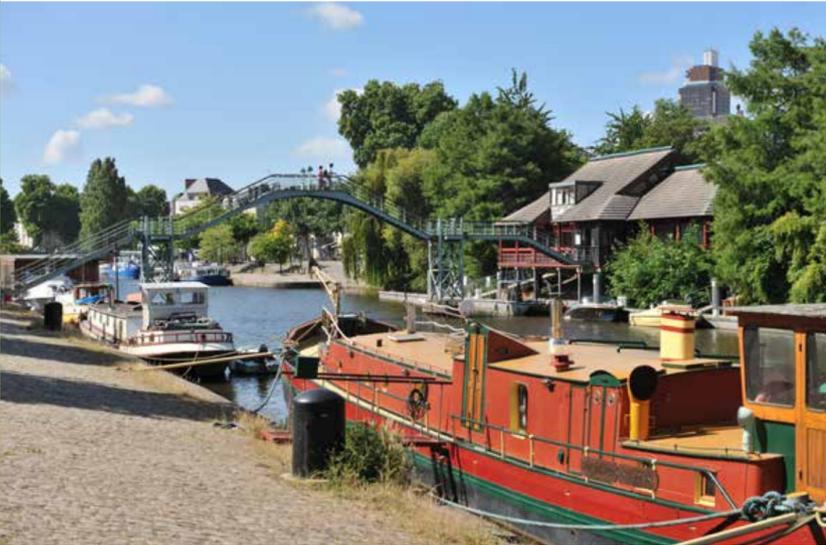
From the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, follies - manor houses - began to spring up along the banks of the Erdre, testifying to the increase in social status of their owners, rich merchants from Nantes. Several châteaux such as the château de la Gascherie at La Chapelle-sur-Erdre were also built.

The Nantes to Brest canal

Napoleon decided to create the Nantes to Brest canal in 1804 to secure commercial links within Brittany. Work continued until 1842 when the channel was fully opened to shipping. In Nantes, the clearing of the Erdre and the cleaning of the Barbin marsh led to the île Barbin in 1831, the first name for the île de Versailles.

Filling in the Erdre

In 1886, the chaussée de Barbin was removed with the construction of the Motte Rouge bridge. 50 years later, the Erdre was rerouted via the Saint Félix tunnel, giving the île de Versailles its current form. At its height the island had 38 houses and workshops. The island started to decline in 1950 and the island lost its last residents at the end of the 1970s, before being purchased by the city in 1983.



L'île de Versailles
Quai de Versailles - Nantes
ALL NANTES +33 (0)2 40 41 9000
www.nantes.fr

Summer: 8.30am - 8pm
Spring, autumn: 8.30am - 6.30pm
Winter: 8.30am - 5.30pm

Tramway line 2, Saint Mihiel or
Pont de la Motte Rouge stop
Chronobus C6, Bonde stop

Maison de l'Erdre opening times

Monday, Thursday, Friday: 1.30pm - 6.15pm
Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays: 9.30am - 12.15pm and 2.15pm - 6.15pm
Closes at 5.15pm in winter

Related services
Harbour master's office
+33 (0)2 40 37 04 62

Ruban Vert
Electric boat hire
+33 (0)2 51 81 04 24

Contre Courant Bivouak
Canoe and kayak hire
+33 (0)6 62 28 60 48

La cocotte en verre
Restaurant open during the week
+33 (0)2 51 86 49 06

The Erdre, a source of economic wealth

From the VIth century, the Erdre was used to transport wood for heating and building materials to Nantes. The people who lived in the countryside would use it to go to the city's markets to buy provisions. At the heart of the city, many businesses sprung up along its banks: laundries, tanneries, carpenters, blacksmiths and so on. These businesses gradually died off during the XXth century. Today, the Erdre still plays an economic role: peat extraction, ship building and craft fishing. But first and foremost, tourism and leisure activities have grown along its banks.

A rich yet fragile ecosystem

From its source, near Candé, on the Loire, the Erdre travels 85 km and crosses a wide range of environments: riverside woodlands, marshy reed beds, flood plains, peat beds and so on. The site is classified for its exceptional landscape and the way it combines wooded parkland and marshes, which is also a real ecological treasure, especially for the many migrating birds which come here. Here is where we find the largest concentration of grey herons in France. The Erdre is part of the Natura 2000 network to maintain and preserve this biodiversity.

The fish in the Erdre

With almost no slope at all, in fish production terms the Erdre is a bream section. Its bed is covered by many aquatic plants or silt. Roach, tench and carp flourish here, in the sea grasses which are ideal for reproduction. Carnivores such as perch, catfish or pike can also be found. More rarely, mullet and eels from the Loire can also be found. In its aquariums, the Maison de l'Erdre exhibits over 20 species of fish from the Erdre. This is the perfect opportunity to dive into this quiet yet action-packed world.



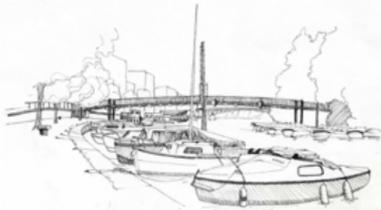
parcs & jardins
DE NANTES

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a house dedicated to the Erdre



MOTTE ROUGE
TRAMWAY LINE 2
(250M)



QUAI DE VERSAILLES BRIDGE



THE PAVILION AND GALLERY

ENTRANCE
QUAI DE VERSAILLES

QUAI DE VERSAILLES



THE JAPANESE STEPS



LANTERN



CLOUD TREE



THE BAMBOO



THE BRIDGE AND WATERFALL

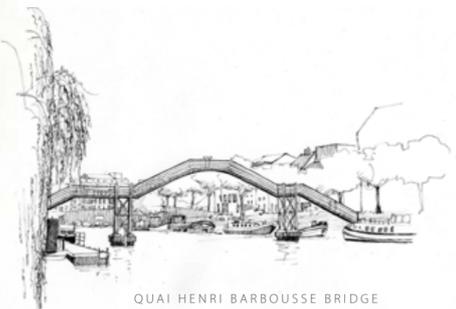


THE TORI

QUAI DE VERSAILLES

MAIN ENTRANCE
TO THE ÎLE DE VERSAILLES

ENTRANCE
QUAI
HENRI BARBUSSE



QUAI HENRI BARBOUSSE BRIDGE



ST MIHIEL
TRAMWAY LINE 2
(100m)

Notable view points

- A. The pool
- B. The pavilion and the Gallery
- C. The Japanese steps
- D. The bridge and the waterfall

Key sites and facilities

- 1. Trio of rocks
- 2. Gata lantern
- 3. Tori
- 4. Tachi-gata lantern
- 5. Wood-panelled bridge
- 6. Covered gallery
- 7. Tea house – La Maison de l'Erdre
- 8. Zen garden

Reception and leisure activities

- Maison de l'Erdre (exhibition)
- Harbour master's office
- Play area
- Canoe - kayak hire
- Electric boat hire

Services

- Restaurant
- Toilets
- Toilets for people with disabilities
- Path accessible to people with disabilities* with assistance
- Path accessible to people with disabilities*

*Access to people with disabilities
The park only is accessible to people with disabilities (the guided route is indicated on the map).
We recommend that you do not walk along the Erdre from the west as there is a bridge which is difficult to cross.
Adapted toilets.

Nantes, between botanical tradition and wild nature

The heir to a long botanical tradition, Nantes is famous for the quality and richness of its ten parks. This tradition is a way of life, which marries the history of Nantes and its geography.

The parks and gardens in Nantes have developed over the centuries with their own identity and their own particular landscapes. Between 1687 and 88, the reign of Louis XIV marked the start of the horticultural adventure in Nantes with the creation of the Jardin des Apothicaires, or Apothecaries' Garden.

This adventure really took off in the XVIIIth century. In 1726, in order to enhance the country's botanical collections, Louis XV ordered ships' captains to bring back plants and seeds from their long distance voyages. The mild climate and the influence of the ocean enabled plants from around the world to flourish.



Parks and gardens in

- 1. Jardin des Plantes
- 2. Île de Versailles
- 3. Parc de Procé
- 4. Parc de la Gaudinière
- 5. Arboretum Cimetière-parc
- 6. Parc de la Chantrerie
- 7. Parc floral de la Beaujoire
- 8. Parc du Grand Blottereau
- 9. Jardins de l'île de Nantes
- 10. Parc des Oblates