

SAINT-LEU D'ESSERENT

VISITS OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES ADVISED BY THE TOURIST OFFICE OF PIERRE SUD OISE ASSOCIATION OF MUNICIPALITIES

Saint-Leu d'Esserent:

Saint-Leu d'Esserent's site testifies human activity signs dating from Paleolithic. These traces from the Gallo-roman and Merovingian area make us believe the site has been continuously occupied since that time.

The town's destiny changes in 1081 when the Lord of the place, **Hugues de Dammartin**, gives his own territory in Hescerent to Cluny abbey. **The Order of Cluny** charges some monks to found a monastery dedicated to Saint-Leu.

The heritage was established by the town's stones. The raw material (St-Leu's shale) was extracted from many places. We can mostly think about the underground quarry of the Convent (90 hectares) that was used as a storage and assembly place of the German V1 bombs during the **WWII**. First exploited by the Gallo-Romans then by the Merovingian people; the stone was transported on boats called "**jobs**" horse-drawn along towpaths...

From the monastic whole, the church still remains, the triumph gate, the cloister, a part of the fortifications, the dovecote and also the **Banvin Cave**. This one was constructed in the 12th and 13th centuries and its name is given by the former Banvin's feudal right: Bannum Vinum. Monks stocked and sold their wine there.

La Grande Jacquerie

In 1337, when the **Hundred-year war** began, the Priory houses 30 monks, the equivalent of a total population of approximately 100 people. Here begins the long decline of the monastery.

Saint-Leu's medieval history is also marked by a national event: la **Grande Jacquerie** is starting; we are May 28th of 1358. On that day, some Clermont count's knights pass by Saint-Leu. The village's inhabitants take them to task. Four knights and five riders including Raoul and Jean de Clermont are killed. The revolt extends itself all around the Bauvaisis and continues to the bloody repression led by the Nobility.

The Priory and the Abbatial

The Benedictine Priory is from an initial donation made by Hugues de Dammartin, Clermont Count at the end of the 11th century.

Private today, it keeps being the old outer wall in what resides now a 12th century pretty gate.

The monks' community decides to enlarge the old roman church. A hall with a late Romanic style gets built during the first middle of the 12th century. In around 1160, the work keeps taking place for the building of the chevet. In the 13th century a gothic nave connects the whole interior of the church.

The Abbatial is 71m long, 21m wide and 27m high under the vault. It is considerate as a masterpiece of the transition art because the beginning of its construction took place at the end of the Romanic area, and the end, during the beginning of the Gothic's. Then you will notice this Abbatial is both Romanic and Gothic!

The Guesdière Castle and its garden "à la Française"

It is a fortified house built by the Clermont Count in the 12th century to protect the clunisian Priory; the castle is getting metamorphosed across the centuries. It houses the City Hall and the **Guesdière Museum** (opened from May to September, on Saturday and Sunday afternoons) dedicated to the Lupovician heritage and history.

The Recreational Area

This place is 70 hectares, contains 20 nautical places aboard the Oise with a swimming place for everyone, a water stretch to practice pedal boat, canoe... It is an **amusement park for families** with play areas and a synthetic ice rink.

The Baroche Place and the sugar refinery

Ernest Baroche, Napoleon III's minister, was the owner of the **sugar refinery** built in 1863. We transformed the sugar beets there, traditional culture of the picard region. The Oise near the sugar refinery had triple rules: the fabrication process of the sugar needed lots of water; the finished material was transported on the river; and at last, the wastes were thrown to the river before we could find a mean to transport them on a fertilizer form. The sugar refinery definitely closed its doors in 1974.

The Bridge of Saint-Leu

In the location of the actual bridge, nearly five bridges and various ferries succeeded to each other since the roman period. The first bridge had a military function. It existed for more than five centuries and insured the traffic between Paris and the Picardie region. A ferry succeeded to this bridge until the 12th century. It was destroyed in 1914 by the French army to stop the German advance. Then two suspended bridges were built and the last bridge but one was demolished by the French army during the WWII. The actual bridge was built immediately after the war.

The quarries

In the 19th century, Saint-Leu d'Esserent lives at the active rhythm of quarries. The extracted stone has an excellent quality. Thanks to the stone the Versailles Castle could be constructed, as well as the Chartes Cathedral. The quarries were converted in mushroom beds at the end of the 19th century. The most important event of the recent history of the town is its total destruction in 1944 because of allied bombings: the focus deal was to destroy the V1 bombs stuck in the quarries of the town by Germans.

Walking paths

Distance: 8.5km

Duration: 2h00

Average difficulty (small difference in height)

Yellow marking (right direction – turn on the left – turn on the right – wrong direction – post)

Departure of the **"In the footsteps of the builders..."** walk

Token n°2 on demand

It is a loop that connects Saint-Leu d'Esserent to Saint-Maximin. It testifies the hard work of quarrymen, the one of stone-cutters, as well as builders'. It also presents other activities like the production of beet sugar, the wine growing before the wreak havoc of phylloxera, the transport over the Oise river, the thermo-electric power station... It tells the history of the monastic enclosure, of the Saint Nicolas priory church and the one of the Benedictine Monks who lived there.

It shows everything about la Grande Jacquerie dating from the middle of the 14th century as well as the editing of the V1 bombs during the Second World War.

Useful addresses:

For more information:

Opened from Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 12.30 pm and from 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm