



Batz-sur-Mer

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Discovering
local heritage



Batz-sur-Mer

Between the ocean and the salt marshes

Situated on the Guérande-La Baule peninsula, our town is bordered to the east by Le Pouliguen, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the west by Le Croisic and to the north by the salt marshes of the Guérande basin.

Salt production in this area dates back to Celtic and Roman times. The name 'Batz' first appeared in 815 and comes from the Breton 'bats', meaning 'submerged'.

The 9th and 10th centuries were marked by the Norman invasions. In 936, Alain Barbetorte, future Duke of Brittany – with the help of Abbot Jean de Landevennec, a pillar of the Breton resistance – took up the fight against the Normans and succeeded in driving them out over the years that followed. As a sign of his gratitude, Duke Alain granted the abbot the island known as Bath-Uuenran ('Batz en Guérande', Uuenran being the old form of Guérande) as well as the salt marshes. This is how the first monks from Landevennec Abbey came to Batz and established a priory there. They brought with them the cult of Saint Guénolé, founder of the abbey in the 5th century.



Human settlements gradually took root upon the granite outcrops, sheltered from the advancing dunes, and developed between the 11th and 18th centuries – a prosperous period that also saw the construction of major religious buildings.

From the 17th to the 19th century, Bourg-de-Batz's economic prosperity grew, based on the extraction and trading of sea salt. However, the early 19th century was marked by serious difficulties for the salt industry, with competition from salt works in the south and east of France, which were increasing their production through mechanisation. A sardine industry also developed, but disappeared in the early 20th century.

At the same time, the boom in sea bathing in the second half of the 19th century and the arrival of the train in 1879 accelerated the town's urbanisation, in particular with the construction of seaside villas and more modest chalets.

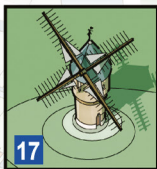
In June 1940, the first German troops moved into the Loire-Atlantique region – including Batz-sur-Mer – which was fortified over the following months and played an important role in the German defence of the Saint-Nazaire submarine base. The German occupation of Batz lasted until 11 May 1945, with the Saint-Nazaire pocket being the last region of France to be liberated.

A Breton cultural identity, a rich religious past, the omnipresence of the salt industry and a thriving seaside resort ... Many traces of Batz-sur-Mer's long history are still visible today.

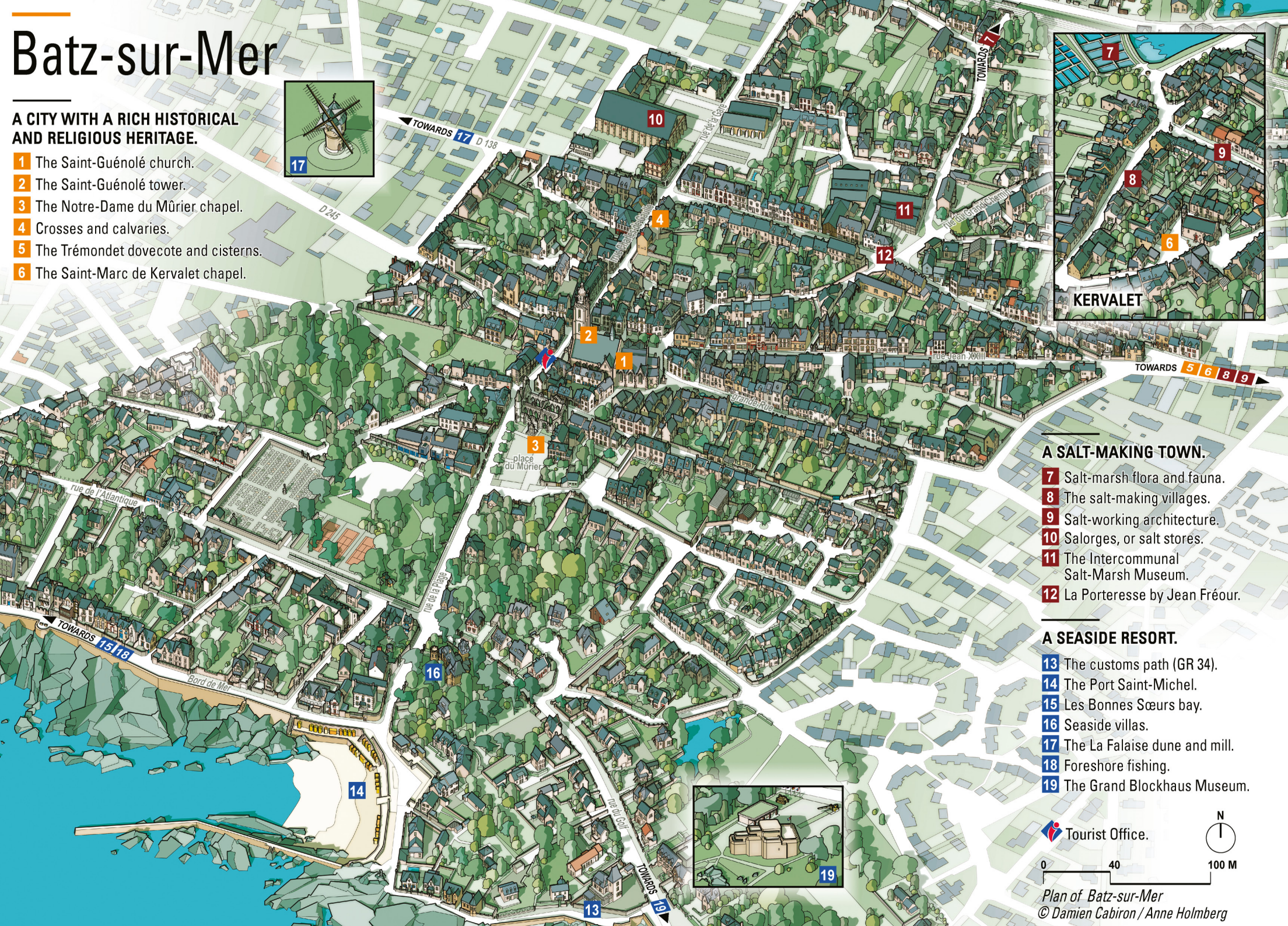


Batz-sur-Mer

A CITY WITH A RICH HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE.



- 1 The Saint-Guénolé church.
- 2 The Saint-Guénolé tower.
- 3 The Notre-Dame du Mûrier chapel.
- 4 Crosses and calvaries.
- 5 The Trémondet dovecote and cisterns.
- 6 The Saint-Marc de Kervalet chapel.

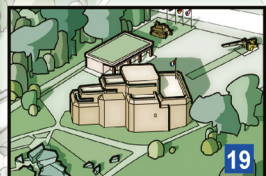


A SALT-MAKING TOWN.

- 7 Salt-marsh flora and fauna.
- 8 The salt-making villages.
- 9 Salt-working architecture.
- 10 Salorges, or salt stores.
- 11 The Intercommunal Salt-Marsh Museum.
- 12 La Porteresse by Jean Fréour.

A SEASIDE RESORT.

- 13 The customs path (GR 34).
- 14 The Port Saint-Michel.
- 15 Les Bonnes Sœurs bay.
- 16 Seaside villas.
- 17 The La Falaise dune and mill.
- 18 Foreshore fishing.
- 19 The Grand Blockhaus Museum.



 Tourist Office.

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1b



1a



2a

1a. North facade of Saint-Guénolé church / 1b. Saint-Guénolé church organ / 2a. Saint-Guénolé tower

A city with a rich historical and religious heritage

With 4 monuments and 57 items of furniture protected as historic monuments, our little town of less than 3,000 inhabitants is fortunate to have a very significant heritage, the fruit of its long history and Breton roots.

1 The Saint-Guénolé church

Originally a simple parish linked to a sanctuary, this modest priory was gradually transformed by the monks into an imposing church, built in the Breton-Gothic style from local granite (1a). The main works began in the 13th century and were completed in the 15th century. The north transept was altered at the end of the 19th century. This church, unusual in that its chancel is offset from the nave, has been modified several times over the centuries and was listed as a 'Historic Monument' in 1909.

As well as numerous works of art and a remarkable 17th-century organ (1b), the church is home some impressive sculpted keystones and large 19th-century stained-glass windows evoking key events in the area's religious history, including episodes from the life of Saint Guénolé, a legendary Breton monk.

A city with a rich historical and religious heritage



2b. Saint-Guérolé tower and Notre Dame du Mûrier chapel from Place du Mûrier / 3a et 3b. Notre-Dame du Mûrier chapel

2 The Saint-Guérolé tower

Built in the 17th century to replace a wooden spire, this tower made from local granite features three storeys topped by a terrace and an octagonal turret, itself topped by a dome (2a). The tower measures 57 metres and rises 70 metres above sea level. Sailors and fishermen have long used it as a landmark – a daymark – when approaching the coast (2b). It offers the most beautiful and highest 360° panorama of the entire Guérande peninsula. In fine weather, you can make out the island of Noirmoutier, as well as the coasts of Morbihan and Belle-Île-en-Mer. The ascent (184 steps/not accessible to persons with reduced mobility) is open to visitors from April to November and managed by the Association des Anciens.

3 The Notre-Dame du Mûrier chapel

Following a plague epidemic in 1450, the inhabitants decided to build a chapel dedicated to Notre-Dame-du-Mûrier. Built in the Flamboyant-Gothic style from local granite, it was completed in 1496. Decommissioned and used as a meeting room for the town council during the Revolution, it was returned to the parish under the Concordat, though worship was never restored here. In 1819, a violent storm caused severe damage to the roof. In order to fix damage caused to the church, structural elements and stones were then taken from the chapel, which was never repaired, but whose ruins were listed as a 'Historic Monument' in 1862 (3a et 3b).



4



5b



5a

4. Croix des Douleurs, Rue de Gaulle / 5a. Trémondet dovecot / 5b. Trémondet cisterns

4 Crosses and calvaries

The many crosses and calvaries dotted across our local area bear witness to Batz-sur-Mer's religious past. Take a stroll through the town and villages to discover and admire them.

Carved into a menhir between the 9th and 11th centuries, the Croix des Douleurs (Cross of Sorrows) (4) has an unusual history: set in a field for many years, it was later embedded in the facade of a house and classified as a 'Historic Monument' in 1944. One legend has it that rubbing against it will cure rheumatism, while another says that it weeps when a Batz family has a quarrel.

5 The Trémondet dovecote and cisterns

This dovecote (5a) was originally part of an ancient property, the manor house of Trémondet, which belonged to a Protestant family traced back to the 16th century. The cylindrical turret is built from local granite.

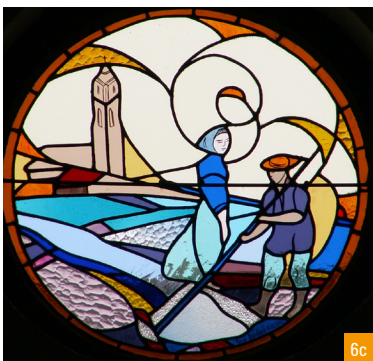
In the immediate vicinity, the three semi-buried cisterns of Trémondet (5b) are brick and mortar cellars which were originally listed as Gallo-Roman upon their classification as 'Historic Monuments' in 1918. We now know that they probably date from the 17th century, and were used to store wine from the estate's harvest.



6a



6b



6c

6a. Saint-Marc de Kervaleet chapel / 6b. South side of Saint-Marc de Kervaleet chapel / 6c. Stained glass window in the oculus by master glassworker Pascal Bouchard

6 The Saint-Marc de Kervaleet chapel

Built in the 15th century on a rock covered with prehistoric cupules, this chapel is typical of Breton architecture from the time, in its very restrained Flamboyant-Gothic style (6a). The bell tower and sacristy were added in 1790. It features an inverted barrel vault and exposed, dragon-headed beams. It is dedicated to the four Evangelists (Saint John, Saint Luke, Saint Matthew and Saint Mark), all of whom are represented by statues, and contains a number of ancient works of art.

Several details (6b) deserve particular attention: for example, the engraved slate sundial dated 1693, or the granite Christ on the Cross that welcomes visitors. Not to mention the Gothic-inspired side entrance door with its 'bazin-red' frames, a typical colour in the local area. This magnificent door is enhanced by a sculpture of the Virgin and Child. More recent, but just as original, is the stained-glass window in the oculus (6c the work of master glassmaker Pascal Bouchard) depicting a pair of salt workers in the salt marshes.



7a. Pied avocet / 7b. Glasswort / 8. Kervalet village

A salt-making town

Salt marshes cover 459 of the town's 927 hectares. Together with those of La Turballe and Guérande, they form the 'Guérande salt marshes'. For 1,500 years, many Batz families have followed one after the other, through the generations, shaping the fragile and exceptional environment and harvesting this 'white gold' using ancestral techniques that can only be mastered after several years of practice.

7 Salt-marsh flora and fauna

The mild climate, shallow water and limited human activity have made this site attractive to wildlife – particularly migratory birds, many of which come here to winter, nest and breed (7a). Around 200 species of bird live in the marshes. In this naturally salty environment, flora is more discreet, but nevertheless very present: for example, sea lavender, sea purslane, tamarisk, fennel, and, the best known, glasswort (7b), a condiment highly appreciated by foodies today.

8 The salt-making villages

Nestling in the heart of the salt marshes, the four salt-making villages can be explored on a stroll. Kervalet (8) is considered one of the most beautiful and oldest salt-marsh villages in the region. It has retained all its character to this day.



9a. Kervalet village / 9b. Grande Rue / 9c. Grand Rue alleyway

Trégaté and Roffiat, more discreet villages yet equally marked by salt-marsh architecture, are also well worth a visit! Kermoisan stands out for its large water tower, adorned with a painted fresco paying tribute to the salt workers.

9 Salt-working architecture

Salt production has had a profound impact on Batz architecture (9a and 9b): the oldest houses are relatively small and low, with steeply pitched roofs, and flanked by outbuildings which were used for professional purposes. The terraced houses sometimes appear to be interlocked, creating a dense, tightly-packed habitat: the alleyways or 'venelles' (9c) – small and very narrow lanes – allow you to travel from one street to another, without having to go around the whole block.

Many of the houses feature their date of construction engraved on the facade, taking curious onlookers back in time. The oldest inscriptions still visible date from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

10 Salorges, or salt stores

During the harvest period, the salt dries in the immediate vicinity of the salt works, on a clay platform known as a 'trémet'. When weather conditions no longer allow salt to be harvested, generally in September or October, the salt workers 'roll' the salt: transporting it for safe storage in the 'salorges' (or salt stores). These wooden or stone buildings featuring walls that slope outwards at the bottom: this is



Grainier à sel - Bourg-de-Batz - 1898



10. The Salt Cathedral / 11a. Exterior of the Salt-Marsh Museum / 11b. Interior of the Salt-Marsh Museum

to allow the weight to be distributed evenly, with a larger base on the ground.

The largest salorge in Batz-sur-Mer is also the largest on the entire Atlantic coast, including the Iberian peninsula! Due to its size, it is known as the 'Cathedral' (10): built in 1896, it is 50 metres long, 27 metres wide and 11 metres high. It was originally capable of housing 12,000 tonnes of salt.

11 The Intercommunal Salt-Marsh Museum

Opened in 1887 by Adèle Pichon, the daughter of salt workers, this museum was originally devoted to old costumes.

A certified 'Musée de France' since 2006, its 850 m² of exhibition space showcases 2,000 years of salt history through 9,000 objects and documents, reconstructions, temporary exhibitions and fun, educational and family-friendly activities and tours.

The ancestral culture of the people of the marshes, salt workers, salt merchants, barge captains and others involved in a unique society based around salt extraction is evoked through a presentation of festive and working costumes, the reddened furniture of their homes and everyday objects that bear witness to the rhythms and stages of life in times gone by. These collections are compared with the figurative works produced by artists at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as the souvenirs intended for seaside holiday-makers.



12a



12b



12c

12a. La Porterresse by Jean Fréour / 12b. 'Au marais – retour du travail' (At the sand marsh – back to work) postcard / 12c. Fréour house on Place du Mûrier

12 La Porterresse by Jean Fréour

This monumental bronze composition (12a) was created in 1984 by Jean Fréour, an internationally renowned sculptor and Batz resident until his death in 2010. Elegant and stately, La Porterresse carries a salt-filled wicker basket on her head. Behind it, a large mural evokes the labyrinth of salt marshes. La Porterresse has naturally become one of the icons of Bourg-de-Batz, in reference to its long history of salt production (12b).

The property (12c) on Place du Mûrier belonging to the sculptor and his wife, both of whom are now deceased, has been acquired by the local authority with the aim of opening it to the public: the garden's restoration began in 2024, while the various building elements will gradually be renovated.

Jean Fréour (1919–2010) studied statuary at the École des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux and was a boarder at the Casa de Velázquez in Madrid. He settled in Batz-sur-Mer in 1955. Several of his sculptures can be admired in the Saint-Guénolé church: a Christ on the Cross, a Holy Family and Our Lady of the Precious Blood. Other works can be seen throughout the Guérande peninsula (list available from the Tourist Office).



13



14a



14b

13. Customs path (GR34) / 14a. Port Saint-Michel / 14b. Yellow huts of Port Saint-Michel

A seaside resort

The town's coastline stretches out for around 5 kilometres and is dotted with beaches, bays, coves and rocky cliffs. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the fashion for seaside resorts and thermal baths gradually spread throughout the region, helped by the arrival of the railway in Batz-sur-Mer in 1879.

13 The customs path (GR 34)

Once used by customs officers to keep an eye on smuggling boats, this path (13) winds its way along the Atlantic Ocean, stretching the entire length of the Batz-sur-Mer coastline and offering a sumptuous five-kilometre walk. Beware, the environment is fragile and sometimes dangerous: you must not stray from the marked path in order to protect both the local flora and yourself!.

14 The port Saint-Michel

This former sardine port, now a marina and family beach (14a), is protected from currents and storms by a long jetty, built in 1853. The beach is particularly popular for its 'petit bassin', a sort of natural swimming pool in which many young Batz residents have learned to swim. At the height of the season, around a hundred yellow beach huts (14b) are set up by their owners: one of the icons of Batz-sur-Mer.



15



16a



16b

15. Les Bonnes Sœurs bay / 16a. Seaside villas /
16b. The Saint-Georges priory

The Pierre Longue, a natural outcrop, stands guard over the port. One legend has it that Saint Michael fought the Devil on this very spot, while another claims that a salt worker buried treasure here.

15 Les Bonnes Sœurs bay

A gentler side to the Côte Sauvage! Several quarries have been dug out here, such as the one at Les Bonnes Sœurs bay (15). Now disused, for many years they provided the granite and schist needed for local construction.

16 Seaside villas

With the boom in tourism, the construction of seaside villas (16a and 16b) intensified, particularly along the Côte Sauvage, on land that had been somewhat neglected at the time by the locals, as it was not particularly fertile for farming. These buildings borrow from a wide range of architectural models, often inspired by historical or regional styles. Those who commissioned these constructions sometimes vied to have the most beautiful, largest and even the most unusual properties!

In 1931, aiming to develop seaside tourism, the town council decided to change the name of 'Bourg-de-Batz' to 'Batz-sur-Mer'.

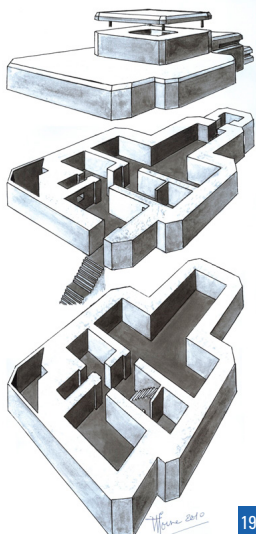


17a. La Falaise dune / 17b. La Falaise mill /
17c. Inside the La Falaise mill

17 The La Falaise dune and mill

As the natural boundary between the salt marshes and the Atlantic Ocean, the La Falaise dune (17a) is home to 15% of the plant species in the Pays de la Loire region, though it represents just 18 hectares, and offers exceptional biodiversity in terms of flora and fauna. From one season to the next, the dunes take on new colours, aromas and residents, some of whom have made the long journey from Africa. A walking trail open to the public allows visitors to enjoy and understand this exceptional environment, while preserving it. From the 1930s onwards, the site supplied drinking water to the towns of Le Croisic and Batz-sur-Mer, thanks to the construction of 25 wells descending to a depth of 8 metres.

Dating from the 16th century and originally located on the Guérande hillside, this granite 'petit-pied' (17b) mill was dismantled and then rebuilt in 1925 in its current location by an enthusiast. Abandoned, burnt down and left in a pitiful state of repair, it was bought by the local council in 1990 and renovated several times to meet professional standards and respect its original architecture. Its old-fashioned, non-motorised mechanism (17c) is still used today by a miller.



18. Foreshore fishing / 19a. Grand Blockhaus / 19b. Interior of the Grand Blockhaus Museum

18 Foreshore fishing

Foreshore fishing is very popular in Batz-sur-Mer. The Tourist Office regularly organises introductory courses on finding shellfish and small crustaceans, while respecting the natural environment and size restrictions.

19 The Grand Blockhaus Museum

This construction, the only one of its kind in Europe, began in October 1942 and was completed in February 1943. This huge block (19a) – 25 metres long by 17 metres high, with a total surface area of 285 m² over three floors (19b) – required no less than 1,800 m³ of concrete.

Originally, the Grand Blockhaus was disguised as a seaside villa with a false roof and painted windows. This fire-control post was used to manage maritime traffic between Belle-Île and Noirmoutier and direct the fire of cannons located at five sites around the Loire.

Refurbished as an authentic German command post with bedrooms, radio-control room, armoury, engine room and panoramic sea views, this private museum also highlights the major events that took place in the region between 1939 and 1945.

Visitor Information

● Town Hall

34, rue Jean XXIII – 44740 Batz-sur-Mer

Tél. 02 40 23 92 25

communication@mairie-batzsurmer.fr

www.batzsurmer.fr

● Municipal Tourist Office

25, rue de la Plage – 44740 Batz-sur-Mer

Tél. 02 40 23 92 36

office.tourisme@mairie-batzsurmer.fr

www.ot-batzsurmer.fr

Things to see and do

● Climbing the Saint-Guérolé tower

Rue de la Plage – 44740 Batz-sur-Mer

Open every day from April to November.

Opening times and prices on www.ot-batzsurmer.fr

Saint-Guérolé church is open to visit free of charge.

● Intercommunal Salt-Marsh Museum

Place Adèle Pichon – 44740 Batz-sur-Mer

Tél. 02 40 23 82 79

www.museedesmaraisalants.fr

● Grand Blockhaus Museum

12 route du Dervin – 44740 Batz-sur-Mer

Tél : 02 40 23 88 29 / www.grand-blockhaus.com

www.petitescitesdecaractere.com

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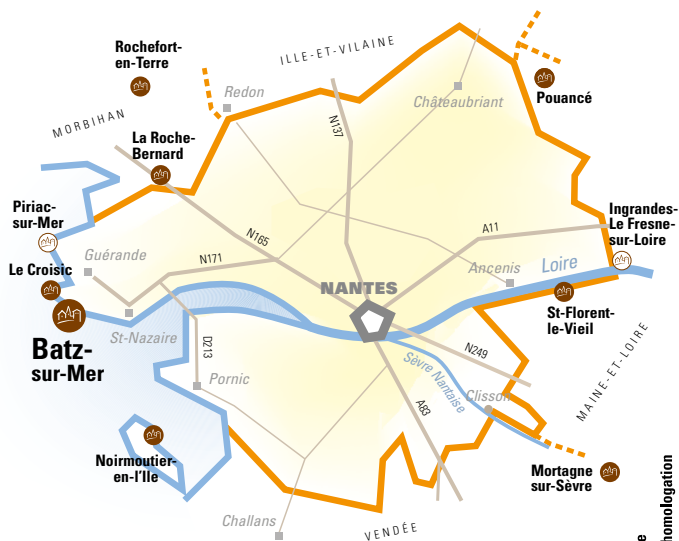
In accordance with precise and rigorous commitments made as to meet the requirements of a National quality charter, these little towns implement innovating ways to enhance their cultural heritage, the local animation and satisfy the public. They are happy to welcome you throughout the year and invite you to their best events and other cultural appointments.

You are invited, so please feel free to push the gates and let them take you on a journey to a certain "art de vivre" (lifestyle).

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des Pays de la Loire



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