

Come and learn the story of **Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines**

« **Ville d'art et d'histoire** »...

... with guides approved by the **Ministry for Culture and Communication**.

The guide that welcomes you gives you the keys to understanding the urban development of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, or the successive metamorphoses of a landscape.

The guide encourages you to see things in a different way, is there to inform you and will be delighted to answer all your questions.

Musée de la ville's educational department

has an extensive programme of activities. All year round you can book guided tours and educational activities for individual visitors and groups (school children, students, adults). It is at your service for any project.

Groups, please contact us

Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines provides guided tours all year round, on reservation. Brochures designed for your information can be sent on request or consulted in Musée de la ville (Town Museum).

Information and reservations

Musée de la ville (Town Museum)

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A French label and network for **Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines**

« **Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire** »

Since 1985, the Architecture and Heritage Department of the Ministry for Culture and Communication has been implementing a policy of promoting and developing France's heritage in partnership with the regional authorities.

This has taken the form of awarding the label Ville et Pays d'art et

d'histoire. A convention obliges the local authorities to employ

qualified staff approved by the Ministry (heritage coordinator,

Ministry-approved guides). The guides present France's heritage

in all its diversity from ancient remains to contemporary architecture.

The network now comprises some 130 French towns and regions

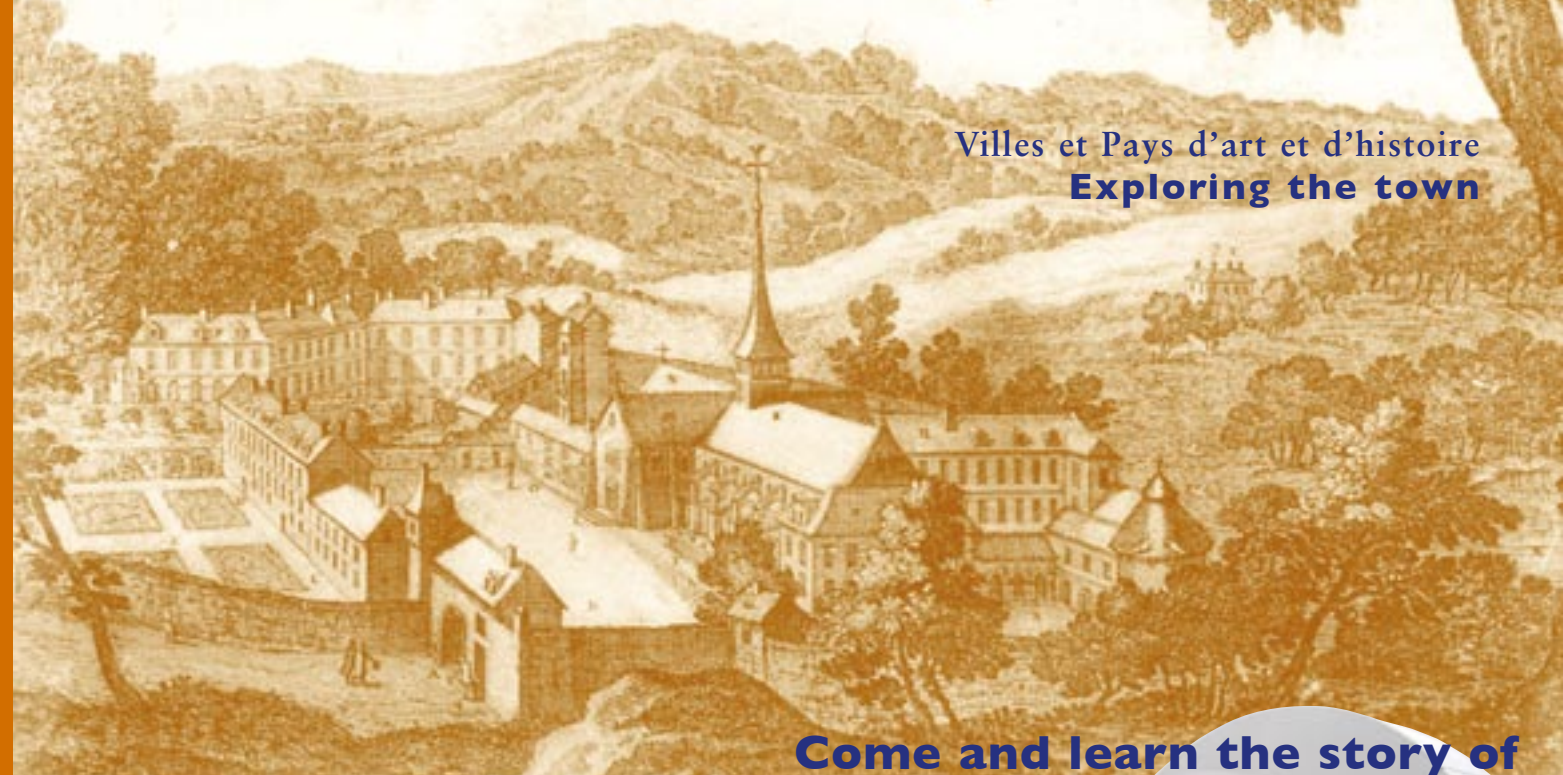
(mainland France and overseas territories).

Near by

Boulogne-Billancourt, Etampes, Meaux, Noisiel, Pontoise and Rambouillet.

« This town of seven towns that isn't a town but where tomorrow already governs the present »

POL-JEAN MERVILLON / in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines by Francis Tack and Pol-Jean Mervillon, editor Francis Tack, 1993.



Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire
Exploring the town

**Come and learn the story of
Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines**



The town takes shape

From a windy, marshy plateau where Louis XIV had a lake dug – from which Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines took its name – to a new town in the west of the Paris region.



Section of Cassini's map (18th century) showing the royal estate of Versailles and the surrounding villages.



A family in front of their garden cabin at La Verrière (c.1950).

Villages in Versailles's Great Park

When Louis XIV moved to Versailles, it caused the neighbouring vast, marshy plain to be transformed into agricultural land, and to supply his wonderful fountains with water the Sun King had a network of conduits laid that stretched almost to Rambouillet. The villages of Guyancourt, Magny-les-Hameaux, Montigny-le-Bretonneux, Trappes and Voisins-le-Bretonneux were all, in part or in whole, within Versailles's Great Park. After the French Revolution, the sale of state possessions initiated a process in which the land was concentrated in the hands of a few big landowners, a process not interrupted until the late 1960s just before the new town was created.



Aerial view (c.1979) of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines.

Railway stations and new urban developments

The construction of railway stations at Trappes and La Verrière (1849) then Saint-Rémy-lès-Chevreuse (1867) attracted lower-class Parisians newly able to buy a «cottage and garden»; these cottages gradually grew into houses. This type of urban development occurred in Trappes (La Boissière), in the centre of La Verrière and at Magny-Cressely. From 1915, the village of Trappes grew into a town and its population increased from 1,500 in 1914 to 3,500 in 1936. After the heavy bombardments of 1944, an ambitious programme to rebuild homes was undertaken and the first high-rise housing estates were constructed in the 1950s.

The beginnings of the new town in the 1970s

In 1965 a new master plan for the planning and urban development of the Paris region (the SDAURP) was compiled for the 15 to 20 million inhabitants expected by the year 2000. The SDAURP therefore planned for new towns to be created around the capital, which were built in the 1970s and constituted a new stage in land management policy. The choice of the site of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines reflected the planners' desire to curb the essentially disorganised galloping urbanisation since the end of the war.



Les 7 Mares district, a convivial place.

Les 7 Mares, an experiment

Elancourt-Maurepas with its 7 Mares centre was inaugurated in 1975 as the first part of the new town. It is often considered the centre of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines since it concentrates the functions of a town centre: housing, administration, retailing and culture. The architects Martine and Philippe Deslandes wanted to create a convivial space not accessible to cars, thus renewing with the Athens Charter and the concept of functional town planning. As the new town's showcase district, it acted as a laboratory for new lifestyles and new social and cultural experiments centred on the Maison pour Tous cultural centre.



Here the architect Ricardo Bofill created a large urban complex, Les Arcades du Lac. The man-made Sourderie lake and its immediate surroundings resemble Versailles.

1980s: a return to traditional town planning

Town planning in the 1980s reintroduced streets, squares and pavement-side car parking. On these principles several districts in the east were laid out around the «three villages» of Montigny-le-Bretonneux, Voisins-le-Bretonneux and Guyancourt. This extremely village-orientated approach combined different types of housing (collective and estates of individual homes) while also introducing axes and perspectives. The overall plans were drawn up by public planning authority (EPA) planners.

An atypical town centre

Saint-Quentin's centre inaugurated in 1987 is essentially laid out around a pedestrianised shopping centre (with underground superstore) an urban canal and an imposing circus for which Manolo Nuñez Yanowsky drew up the initial plans. Three design periods can be clearly distinguished: the station's immediate surroundings dating from the 1970s, the majority of the town centre, designed in the 1980s, and certain cultural infrastructures designed by well-known architects and inaugurated in the 1990s.



Place Georges-Pompidou (or Place Ovale) forms a somewhat monumental entrance.

The town today, still developing

In late 2002 the EPA closed down. On 17 September 2003 a new conurbation syndicate (SAN) grouping together the communes' elected representatives voted unanimously in favour of a commune grouping (communauté d'agglomération). Its main considerations are presently aimed at rethinking links between the districts, making the town's layout more comprehensive and linking the Saint-Quentin lake with the town centre. Having just left the French new towns project (a national interest operation), in 2006 Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines was incorporated into a new national interest operation stretching east to Massy via Versailles and the Saclay plateau.

Down through the centuries

From the Middle Ages to the present day Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines has been the theatre of historic events of national and local importance.

Port-Royal-des-Champs

The abbey founded in 1204 lived a discreet existence for several centuries. In 1609 Angélique Arnauld, the abbess, reformed its community. The convent came under the influence of several spiritual leaders such as François de Sales and Saint-Cyran who supported Jansenist ideas. From 1648 the abbey called Les Champs and the Parisian part of Port-Royal enjoyed tremendous intellectual prestige; the Petites Ecoles (schools) flourished and teaching was revitalised. The philosopher Pascal stayed at Les

Champs, the future author Racine was trained and educated there. However, religious authorities, notably the Jesuits, were hostile to its Jansenist ideas with their philosophical bent. Persecutions began in the early 17th century and eventually the abbey was destroyed in 1710.

The French Revolution: the registers' testimony

The sale of state possessions was particularly meaningful here due to the proximity to Versailles. The registers of grievances compiled in the area testify to a

fundamental antagonism between the peasants, who aspired to owning their own land, and the land-owning farmers, who essentially wanted to accumulate more. The sale of state possessions in fact favoured the latter in spite of a local regulation in support of the lowest classes (1793 to 1795). During the 19th and 20th centuries those land-owning farmers' descendants were to be found running the region's huge cereal-growing farms.



Portrait of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) who stayed in Port-Royal-des-Champs.



The Port-Royal-des-Champs estate (abbey ruins, Petites Ecoles, Les Granges farm) reunified in 2004 is one of the most important heritage sites.



Polychrome postcard of the Decauville farm testifying to the area's rural past and its large cereal-growing farms.



The marshalling yard in Trappes. This photo from 1946 shows business starting up again after the 1944 bombardments.



In the Musée de la ville, a model helicopter symbolises the founding of the new towns: General De Gaulle flying over the Paris region accompanied by Paul Delouvrier.



The first tourist brochure published in 1979.



Manolo Nuñez Yanowsky's project for the town centre (1980), not adopted. The architect wanted to install café terraces under the arcades to encourage socialising.

Trappes's marshalling yard

When one of Europe's largest marshalling yards was built in Trappes (from 1915) this led to intensive urbanisation, with almost 40% of the population being railway workers. In the years leading up to the new town's creation, Trappes had approximately 15,000 inhabitants; since it stood at the geographical centre of the new town and had the largest population, the new conurbation was initially called New Town of Trappes. Its working-class roots have left important historical and urban traces.

11 communes for a new town

In February 1972, an initial perimeter for Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines based on 15 communes was proposed to the local councils. This was refused, corrected and then in December 1972 validated by the creation of a Communal planning syndicate for the new conurbation (SCAAN). The first new districts began to go up during the 1970s, first to the west and then to the east. The public planning authority (EPA) had to build infrastructures (roads, sewers, green spaces etc) and to plan the new districts.

Inter-commune cooperation, a laboratory?

Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines was the result of a governmental town and country planning policy that was imposed on local politicians. In late 1972 the 11 communes concerned joined forces in the SCAAN so they could counterbalance the planners and the urbanisation being forced on them. In addition the new inhabitants (later nicknamed «pioneers») had started to organise themselves, setting up a vast network of associations to bring the conurbation so recently created to life. The social experiments devolving from May 68 and the sociocultural movement definitely struck a chord in these new urban areas.

The town centre issue

In late 1981 there was disagreement between planners and local politicians over the town centre. A fair number of the latter had come to power in the 1977 municipal elections that saw a new generation of mayors emerge, many of them members of the «pioneer» movement. Boosted by the new demographic weight of their communes, they in fact forced the EPA to share its powers and rethink its project. The final result is a compromise. The centre of the new town is not as large as it should be for a population of 150,000.

From place to place

Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines tells its story through its rural and religious heritage, its working-class and contemporary architecture, its corporate buildings and public amenities.

Villedieu, religious and rural heritage

The history of the Knights Templars' Commandery founded in the 12th century combines religion and agriculture, just like the big farms on the plateau that before the Revolution all belonged to religious houses: Port-Royal, Dames de Saint-Cyr, Saint-Denis's possessions. After the state possessions were sold off they became large farms and their buildings were transformed in the name of profitability. The Commandery was restored by the EPA (1970s), which established its first information and cultural centre there. Today this place where residents walk and practise leisure pursuits testifies to the rural past.

Les Dents de Scie

Between 1926 and 1931 Henri Gutton and his son André built one of the first working-class estates in Trappes. The 40 houses on either side of Avenue Marceau are all set at a 45° angle to the street, creating a Cubist perspective. To reduce costs and apply the principles of modern architecture, the architects designed very simple façades. The houses all have private gardens at the back. This estate of identical houses inspired by a German model is unique in France and thanks to its inhabitants was listed in the supplementary inventory of historical monuments in 1992.

Les Vagues, tiered apartment blocks

In the "7 Mares" district, Philippe Deslandes (1933-1988) and Martine Deslandes designed and built two parallel blocks of flats known as "Les Vagues" (the waves) because of the undulating parapets along their walkways and terraces. The exterior, for which bare concrete was deliberately chosen, reveals the influence of Le Corbusier's "Unité d'Habitation" in Marseille.

New-town corporate architecture

Attracted to the new town by vast plots of land and advantageous financial conditions, companies had carefully landscaped and architected office blocks and complexes built here. At the turn of the 1980s corporate architecture was becoming a form of publicity so these buildings also contributed to corporate images. Company headquarters were built, such as Challenger for the Bouygues group by the architect Kevin Roche, and other buildings were designed by famous architects including Renzo Piano for Thomson Optronique, Roger Taillibert for EADS, and the Technocentre Renault by Valode and Pistre (for the overall site plan and La Ruche).

Marta Pan's *La Perspective*

This is one of a series of five important artworks on the theme of water, a significant component of this area's identity, that can be seen as you walk around the town centre. *La Perspective* is a sequence of three sculptures: the engulfments (three geometrical symbols inspired by Chinese philosophy), the pond with its meta-arrow, and the shallow water-covered steps with their metal circles. Together these create a landscape, a transition between town and park, architecture and nature.

Places for education and culture

New towns wanted to innovate, so they developed new cultural and educational policies. Initial efforts focused on facilities for young children, doubtless because of exponential population growth rates! At that time the popular concept was integrated amenities, i.e. interacting together so as to encourage people to circulate and exchange ideas. With the passing decades other themes have been explored and sports and culture facilities have often been designed by renowned architects. These buildings, such as

Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines's Theatre by Stanislas Fiszer, have become the town's landmarks. The town centre has particularly benefited thanks to Antoine Grumbach's university, Jacques Ripault's university library, Massimiliano Fuksas's communication centre etc.



The chapel of the Villedieu Templars' Commandery at Elancourt dates from the 13th century.



The Dents de Scie urban housing estate is unique in France.



Les Vagues' residents reach their apartments along walkways with undulating bare concrete parapets that create an eye-level game for children.



Challenger, the Bouygues group's headquarters, is one of the most important corporate buildings of the 1980s.



Marta Pan's *La Perspective* at the entrance to the Sources de la Bièvre park, a favourite place for walks.



Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines's national Theatre. Its architecture borrows from Renaissance Italy – this rotunda lit by an oculus – while the façade was directly inspired by Auguste Perret's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

Flavours and knowhow

Few culinary specialities here but a definite taste for a new art of living in which audacity colours life. Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines grows day by day in accordance with its balanced identity of «urban nature park» at the gates of Paris.

A green and blue town

Sixty per cent of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines's land area is given over to man-made green and blue spaces. The relief, tree cover, number of green spaces and diverse water features create a very specific identity: a town amidst nature. From the leisure centre to the urban parks with their public art, from the parts still under cultivation to the prestigious Port-Royal-des-Champs park, the range and quality of landscapes are a major factor in the new town's success.

An open-air museum

From the late 1970s public commissions brought art into the streets and because the new towns were new urban environments considered birthplaces for innovation, public art earned its letters patent in them. By enabling confrontation between artists, town planners and architects, the EPAs became the militants of this new approach. The 80 artworks dotted around Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines testify to the history of contemporary art and its movements, from young artists' sculpture of the 1970s through kinetic art to new figurative art.

Land of innovation

Possibly because of its proximity to Paris, Versailles and Grignon, this has always been a land of innovation, from the teaching that began when the Petites Ecoles opened at Port-Royal to the prowess of big farmers winning important prizes for agricultural innovation. In technology and research we can mention the Trappes marshalling yard, the meteorological centre, INRA at Guyancourt and the airfield where Hélène Boucher pushed back the frontiers of flying.

Brain power: the conquest of the west

In 30 years Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines has become the second most important economic centre in the west of the Paris region, a success that can be measured in figures: more than 5,000 companies within its boundaries providing 105,000 jobs. Today the conurbation hosts the headquarters of internationally renowned companies along with research and development centres for cutting-edge industries: engineering, automobile manufacturing, information and telecommunication technologies,

finance, the pharmaceutical industry, transport etc. The Technocentre Renault, Bouygues, Sodexho, EADS Défense et Sécurité, Banque Populaire and Crédit Agricole are some of the symbols of this success. Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is also associated with two world competitiveness clusters (System@Tic Paris-région and Movéo) and one national one (Ville et Mobilité Durable).

A place where urban cultures emerge

In the 1970s Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines used cultural policies for welcoming and assisting new inhabitants. With its community radio, local television channel and eco-museum (opened in 1977, one of the first in France), it demonstrated the dynamics out of which new art forms emerged. In Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines the hip-hop movement started with the first shows by the multi-racial B3 company (Black Blanc Beur). Street theatre with Unité and its Carnaval des Ténèbres so marked the collective memory as to become almost a myth. Today,

proud of its national Theatre and its public reading network (one of the biggest in France), of its Musée de la ville (Town Museum), its Poetry House and its Environment, Science and Sustainable Development Centre, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines flaunts a cultural offering that is rich and diverse.



The Sources de la Bièvre park is a mosaic of gardens laid out from 1975, one of them created by Dani Karavan.



The Simonnets' *Arborescence polymorphique*, nicknamed The Spaghetti, was faithfully restored in 2004.



The Technocentre Renault on its 150ha site was built from 1991 to an overall site plan by the architects Valode and Pistre, providing a total of 600,000m² of offices, laboratories, rest areas etc.



The CRAV audiovisual resources centre has developed audiovisual projects for the national education system.



Merkado's META, symbolising the source of the Bièvre river, in the town centre, seen at night with Richard Leteurtre (Thalia Théâtre company) and the K association.



Carte du patrimoine, 147 sites à découvrir,
a publication available from Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines's Information Office or Musée de la ville.



Guided tours

Come and learn the story of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Ville d'art et d'histoire, with guides approved by the Ministry for Culture and Communication. The guide that welcomes you gives you the keys to understanding the urban development of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, or the successive metamorphoses of a landscape.

1hr 30min or a little longer

Guided tours and educational activities last approximately an hour and a half and must be reserved in advance.

➔ The guide will meet you at:
Musée de la ville
(Town Museum)
Quartier Saint-Quentin
Quai François Truffaut
78180 Montigny-le-Bretonneux
Tel: +33 (0)1 34 52 28 80

The museum is located near the Canal media library (Médiathèque du Canal), close to Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines's Theatre.

Access:

By car. From Paris, porte d'Auteuil, A13 and A12 exit Montigny-le-Bretonneux, Centre commercial régional (follow Théâtre de Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines). Free parking 3 hours long.

By train. Gare SNCF – RER C, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines station.

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Down page : *La Perspective* et la Bibliothèque universitaire, © Musée de la ville D. Huchon, septembre 2006.

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