

Two bridges... farther

A Stroll through Pont-Audemer,
Looking Back and Looking Forward

In the year 715, welcome to Deux Ponts. In 1025, welcome to Pontem Aldemari. Around 1040 here you are in Aldemari Ponte, and in 1475, Pontheau de mer!

As all these different names tell us, Pont-Audemer came into existence where it was easiest to cross the river.



Morning mist on the media library

A remarkable place where all the elements conducive to a thriving economic fabric come together – forests, abundant water, rich prairies. Pont-Audemer has long been a crossroads for trade and artisan production.

Its very prosperity quickly obliged it to build defensive structures to protect the town: a château in the 11th century, fortifications in the 12th century and a town charter in the 13th century.



Sign early 1900's ©



Medieval street © P. Girard



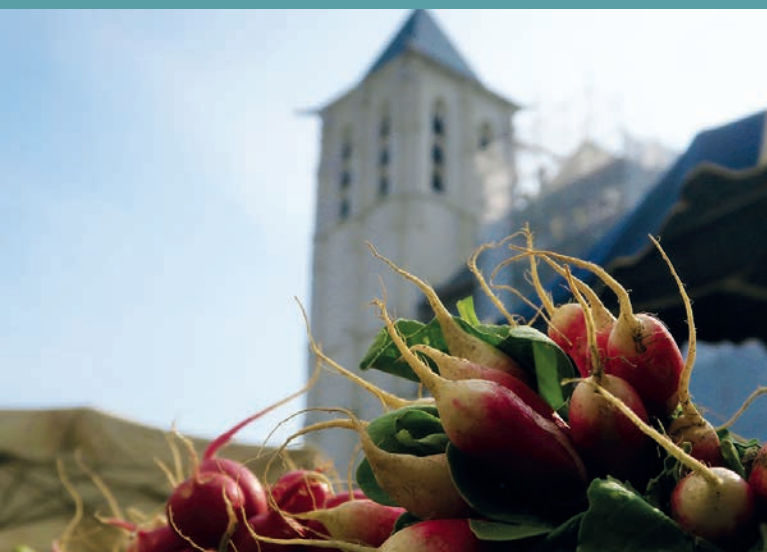
Flowered square © CCPAVR

With its good balance, Pont-Audemer withstood the hard economic times following the post-war boom, seizing the opportunities for new industry and welcoming foreign groups, so as to remain the population centre of the western Eure region.



At the end of the Saint Ouen cul-de-sac © O. Foltz

As you walk, note the diversified architectural styles reflecting each major shift in the city's development.



Monday and Friday: market days since 1034 © O. Foltz

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The town endured suffering and violence inflicted by the violent times it lived through. The Hundred Years' War, the Wars of Religion, royal demands to support the garrisons all brought greed and fighting. Yet the town is also open-minded and determined. It has long stood up to the ever-present threat posed by the inescapable silting-up of the Risle river which gave it access to the sea, to the world.



The Cartonnerie, business incubator in Pont-Audemer © CCPAVR Patrimoine

With the advent of industrialisation, it brought in foreign workers to learn the new techniques of leather-tanning. English workers and their families settled in Pont-Audemer, bringing their expertise in modern tanning, which had been Pont-Audemer's specialty since the Middle Ages. The Englishman Elliott introduced malleable fittings for the buckle industry. Another Englishman, Bayle, first build railroads, then founded a papermill. Thierry Hermès, founder of the Parisian luxury goods firm of the same name, came to Pont-Audemer from Prussia, to settle and learn the trade of saddle-making. These foreigners all shared post-Reformation religion and were Protestant or Anglican. They formed a close-knit community that benefited the people of Pont-Audemer. An open-minded attitude and a flourishing business spirit enabled Pont-Audemer to maintain nearly constant prosperity throughout the centuries.

Among Pont-Audemer's most prestigious buildings is the Church of Saint Ouen, full of the life that drives the city.



Light through the stained glass, Church of Saint Ouen © V. Ferron

Adaptability, one of the key words to describe Pont-Audemer, also means that it's always on the move, with dynamic infrastructures, markets, neighbourhoods... reflected in the water that surrounds it.

Enjoy exploring Pont-Audemer!

HEY!

COME WITH US!!

Going further



Join in the adventures of Constance and Gautier (see the signs) and learn a lot about past, present and future!
First challenge: look all around and find each image you see on this brochure in the city.



ALL ABOUT PONT-AUDEMER

1 Founding a city

Pont-Audemer is a small French city ranked as one of the “most beautiful detours in France”. The town streets wind around the medieval city centre creating magnificent views seen from the valley and the highlands. Today Pont-Audemer has all the infrastructures of the 21st century yet retains all the charm of its historical past. A delight to visit!

2 Claiming for theaters

With the good lifestyle so prevalent, Pont-Audemer really needed places for people to get together and enjoy life. In Pont-Audemer you have the theatre, *L'éclat*, with inspirational, eclectic programming that appeals across the board. There is also a lively multi-media library, neighbourhood clubs, colourful bistros and outstanding restaurants. Check out the menus, and the theatre offerings!

3 Living as a scholar in the 19th century

Alfred Canel was a learned historian and book lover who lived in Pont-Audemer in the 19th century. But did he ever imagine that on the banks of the Risle would one day stand *La Page*, an amazing multi-media library where it is sheer pleasure to work, read, hang out and play? *La Page* is part of the network of county libraries in County Eure. It provides access to a wide range of digital resources, and is the venue for workshops and activities that bring people together to work and play.

4 Rebuilding after war

Pont-Audemer has demonstrated remarkable resilience. During the Hundred Years War which stretched from 1337 to 1453, it was a pawn at stake between the King of England and the King of France. The city was reputed to be “very big and very rich” from the 11th to the early 14th century. And it was ravaged by battles. Yet, it came back to life. The Wars of Religion in the 16th century destroyed it once again. And it once again rebuilt and revived. 35% of the city was damaged during the Second World War and Pont-Audemer resolutely rebuilt, and retained its soul.

5 Shipping on the river Risle

With industry leaving the valley, *the Rizela* (as the Risle was called in the 11th century) is no longer used for power and for washing. It is a peaceful river full of fish, a thriving river conducive to species threatened throughout the world. With the Étangs and the Marais Vernier, the Risle creates a major wetland and was awarded the status of a RAMSAR site in 2018.

6 Shaping a city

Great care has been taken since 1945 with the architecture of public buildings. Aesthetic quality and originality have been the priorities of local decision makers, due in part to the proximity to the historical monument of the Church of Saint Ouen and the desire to retain the specific charm of the city. See for yourselves the black-and white lacework in the 3000m² that Elisabeth Ballet designed for the paving on the square Place du Pot d'Étain.

16 Imagining a life here !

The 16th sign is missing. Can you dream it up? Imagine that you settle in Pont-Audemer. What do you see?

15 Strolling the Grand'Rue

And now it's time to wander! It's time to stop in the tavern (or the café if you are modern), the inn (or the yummy bistro). If you're hungry you must try the mirliton! A rolled fine biscuit filled with praline cream and capped with two little chocolate tips, the mirliton was created by Guillaume Tirel, better-known as Taillevent, in 1340 when he was the cook for the French Court. A royal delight to sample as you wander the narrow streets.

14 Praying and believing

In 2015, work began on restoring the Church of Saint Ouen. The beauty of the original sculptures is beginning to once again emerge. The “grand old lady” is currently undergoing the most extensive work since it was completed in the 1400's. The removal of the scaffolding has revealed the décor of its wooden vault and the result is dazzling.

13 Taming the water

What used to be done in échaudes, you can now do in a kayak! Of course you won't be taking your cow with you on the boat but it is great fun to go up and down the canals. The greenery is beautiful (the city has won prizes for its gardens), you will see fish and it is always amazing to discover medieval buildings as seen from the water.

12 Going up to Saint Germain

The street Rue Jules Ferry which connects the city to Saint Germain has had many names: *Bolgerua*, *Bulgerua*, *Bougerue* in the 11th century, then Rue de Saint Germain and Route d'Honfleur. In 1547, there were buildings on both sides of the street and there was the Protestant temple, which was destroyed in 1687. Once you made your way up to the Church of Saint Germain, you must continue to discover the magnificent views from Gibet and reach the plateau where flax, wheat and rapeseed wave in the wind. Here beautiful walks await you.

11 Taking the train

Move, leave, come back ... though today the automobile is omnipresent, the quality of life in Pont-Audemer has resolutely turned towards soft transport. Connecting the city to the highlands around it, making it easy for cycling, connecting the city, centrally located in Normandy, to the A13 motorway to Paris and to the sea. You can come and go easily ... and you'll most likely come back!

10 Turning hides into leather

Though Pont-Audemer was indeed strongly influenced by its strong leather-tanning trade, it was also famous in the Middle Ages for paper-making and for the quality of its textiles. These businesses, which still flourished in the 1800's, have now disappeared. Today the city is proud of its leading-edge technologies in aeronautics, data storage, platurgy, concrete products, flexible packaging, and it continues its paper activity.

9 Living in the heart of the city

The square Place Victor Hugo, with its modern-day fountain, is the snail around which the city coils. All the city streets lead to the square which remains extremely sought after for shops in the centre city. Stroll the square and enjoy the cool air the fountain contributes to the heart of the city.



7 Bringing light

The reconstruction of this street in the early 17th century shows great ingenuity. The quest to bring light into the dark medieval homes resulted in making rooms bigger and consequently, houses higher. With the development of Freemasonry in France, many façades were embellished with discreet masonic symbols: Solomonic columns, acacia leaves, triangle points ... Can you find them?

8 Going to the markets

The markets founded in 1034 are lively. People come from far and wide on Monday and Friday to enjoy local production. Organic dairy products, heirloom vegetables grown by local farmers, bread made in wood-fired ovens, oysters and fish from the coast, free-range eggs and poultry are all part of the offer on hand at the markets and in the food shops. Their fame is well-deserved.