

Champagne vineyards faced in the 19th century saw that the Anjou and Touraine areas, and hence Saumur in particular, supplied additional supplies of sparkling wines to meet the demand for sparkling wine in this period. Some of the great wine houses of Saumur then went on to produce 'Saumur Brut', including the **Gratien & Meyer cellars**, of which we can catch sight on the hillside, but also the Grenelle, Ackerman, Veuve Amiot, Langlois-Château as well as Bouvet-Ladubay cellars.



Windmills

Windmills were established on Saumur's hill between the 15th and 18th century: their significance was such that the street overlooking the slope today is called "rue des moulins" (Street of the Mills). The last remnant of them can be seen from the Loire: the base of an old **cavier-mill** (a French hollow post mill).

Those mills were made up of three distinctive features:

- at the top, the **cabin**, a mobile part supporting the sails and the driveshaft,
- in the middle, the **great**, stone-built, conical tower,
- below, the **hollow**, that contained the millstones.

A view of Saumur from the Loire

Once past the Cessart Bridge, we come to another district of Saumur: the "**Quartier Saint Nicolas**", situated around the equally named church. Saint Nicolas is the **patron saint of the Loire's barges and fishermen**, to which the church is devoted to. "**La marine de Loire**" (merchant marine of the Loire) had its heyday in the 18th century, before it was considerably weakened by the arrival of the railway. Though now a defunct industry, we can still notice the significance "la marine de Loire" must have had given the extent of the **docking ports**. Besides the docks and boat ramps of the various ports,



Saint Nicolas

let us further notice the presence of **towing rings** inside the Cessart Bridge's arches, reminding us how difficult bridge passings used to be.

The flood marker on the bridge denotes the variations in water levels. "La marine de Loire" existed because the Loire was **the primary form of transportation** where goods transportation was concerned, whether it was for the transportation of **materials** such as Trélazé slate, **exotic products** such as spices, or even of **wine**, products which were difficult to transport by any other means in that period.

The Loire navy in Saumur

Once past the Cessart bridge, we come to another district of Saumur: the "**Quartier Saint-Nicolas**", organised around the equally named church. Saint Nicolas being the patron saint of Loire's barges and fishermen, the church is devoted to the latter. The **Loire navy** had its heyday in the 18th century, before it was considerably weakened by the arrival of the railway. Though now disappeared, we can still notice the significance this navy must have had given the extent of the docks. Besides docks and slipways of various ports, let us further notice the presence of towing rings inside the Cessart bridge arches, reminding us how difficult bridge transits used to be. The flood gauge at the bridge angle evokes the variations in water levels. Such a significant Loire navy did exist because the Loire was the royal way as regards goods shipping—wether it concerned the transportation of materials such as Trélazé slate, that of exotic products such as spices, or even that of wine.



The flood marker

The Horse riding capital of France

If there was one name that could be associated with Saumur, it would be that of the **Cadre Noir**. The training of cavalymen in Saumur dates back to the Protestant horse riding Academy founded by Duplessis-Mornay. Louis XV founded a school of riflemen here in 1771. From 1898, because of the **new colour of its uniform**, Saumur's military garrison became known as the **Cadre Noir**. The Cadre Noir became the heart of the **Cavalry School**, which can be seen, beyond the docks, **the stables, armou-ry** and historical buildings.

Today, its chief Horseman remains a military officer, but since 1972 the **National Horse Riding School**, that perpetuates the French horse riding tradition, has been located in the Woods of Terrefort, just outside Saumur; it now falls within the scope of two French ministries, the Ministry of Sport and Ministry of Agriculture. Since 2011 the "tradition of French equestrianism", of which the Cadre noir is the custodian, **has been listed by UNESCO as an intangible world cultural heritage**.



Cavalry School

Croisières
Saumur Loire

The Loire seen
from the river

Come aboard for
an unforgettable
journey!



Discover

Taste

Contemplate

Dream



Our cruise is drawing to its end. We thank you for your attention; we hope you have enjoyed your time aboard our boat and we wish you an enjoyable stay in our region.



Grand Saumur Anjou Val de Loire



Come and Discover The Outstanding Beauty Of The River Loire And Saumur Onboard the Saumur Loire !

Welcome aboard the Saumur Loire !

First of all, we ask you to observe a few safety instructions:

- Please stay seated during BOTH departure and arrival of the boat at the dock, However once the boat has departed you are free to move and walk to the front or the rear of the boat whilst the boat is in the centre of the river.
- Do NOT lean out of the boat.

The Loire Valley between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes-sur-Loire **was listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site** in 2000 and designated as “an outstanding cultural landscape along a river which bears witness to an interchange of human values and to the harmonious development of interactions between human beings and their environment over two millennia”.

The Saint Nicolas Saumur Boat Company invites you to discover this outstanding landscape from the best view available on board our boat where you can experience the relationship that exists between Saumur and the Loire.

A fortified town

In the 15th century the town of Saumur was entirely walled: Some even consider that the very name of the town would refer to its fortifications: “Saumur” Which is alleged to have come from the Latin “Salvus Murus”, i.e. “protective enclosure”. Traces of this wall remain to this day, for example, **the left hand wing of the Town Hall (Marie)** (just up from the dock from which you have embarked onto the boat). As a matter of fact, this old wing dates back to the 15th century: it was formerly part of the fortified wall of the town and was designed to strengthen the defence of the town principle crossing bridge (this bridge, which dated back to the middle ages is still visible by virtue of the old piers in the middle of the Loire when the river is low). Another vestige of the towns fortified past is the old corner tower, the **Papegault Tower**, which can be seen beneath the castle.



Town Hall

Atop the hill stands the **Castle of Saumur** which stands imposingly above the old fortified town. Immortalised in the French Gothic Manuscript “Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry” (a book of hours). **Surrounded by its ramparts**, the Castle of Saumur was positioned to watch and defend a critical crossing place over the river Loire. During the night of the 22nd of April 2001 a part of its northern ramparts

collapsed. The ramparts, that are built from **Tuffeau stone** (a form of soft sedimentary rock), may have suffered from undermining by rainwater. It took 7 years to rebuild the crumbled ramparts. To ensure that this did not reoccur, it was rebuilt using reinforced concrete then clad in Tuffeau stone to preserve the monument’s originality and beauty.



Castle of Saumur

The Protestant Reformation and Catholic Reformation Saumur: a Protestant “place of safety”

Within the Edict of Nantes in 1598 a hundred places of safety were granted to Protestants by the King of France. Among those places of safety was the town of Saumur, which was then bestowed a governor, Duplessis-Mornay, and a Protestant garrison. The fortifications of the town of Saumur were strengthened at this time to ensure the safety of its inhabitants.

Because the “**Pope of Huguenots**”, (The Calvinist Protestants of France became known as the Huguenots) Duplessis-Mornay, lived within the town and wished to make Saumur a stronghold of European Protestantism (like Geneva), the route leading to a

part of the ramparts was named **la Montée du Petit Genève** (Slope of the Little Geneva). Rated amongst one the safest of places for Protestants by the Edict of Nantes, Saumur became a Huguenot centre, in particular through the creation of the Protestant Academy, it was responsible for the training of the elite of the Protestant church. A prime example of which, would be **William Penn**, who did a two-year course of study in Saumur and then went on to found the Province of Pennsylvania in North America twenty years later. However the founding of the **Royal Chapel Notre-Dame des Ardilliers**, in “Quartier du Fenêt”, demonstrates the Catholic Church’s will to influence the town of Saumur. Both a **healing water spring** and the discovery of a “**pietà**” by a peasant in the «ardille» (an old French term for the clay that makes up the ground at the base of the hillside) began a pilgrimage by worshipers of the catholic church as



Chapel Notre-Dame des Ardilliers

part of an important ‘Marian pilgrimage’ which pathed the way for the construction of the first chapel. **155 miracles were reported here** up to the second half of the 18th century. In the 17th century Catholic authorities took advantage of the Marian cult² to win back the Protestant town: in 1614 the sanctuary management was entrusted to **the Oratorian Order**. They created a **Royal College** and a **School of Theology**³, the latter of which rivalled with the Protestant Academy. Architecturally speaking, it is interesting to notice that, before the construction of “Les Invalides” in Paris, the rotunda “des Ardilliers”, with its **27-metre tall dome**, was considered the **largest in the Kingdom**.

The Loire in Saumur: a wild river?

At 1,013 kilometres in length the Loire is France’s longest river; its watershed covers up a fifth of French soil. It springs from the Mont Gerbier de Jonc, a mount in Ardèche, in the Massif Central.

Often described as the “**last wild river**” of France, the Loire in Saumur has the characteristics of a river where man’s work is at the same time present and absent. Let us start by noting the presence of the **dyke** connecting the head of Offard Island over to the right of the town: the aim of its construction is to prevent the Loire from splitting into several branches, especially when the water level is low. Thus, by

concentrating the river flow towards the town centre, the dyke allows the Loire the capacity to make its own channel. Once past the railway bridge, we come to a natural area where we can observe the natural river banks. At the heart of the **Loire-Anjou-Touraine Natural Park**, the scenery we can admire is representative of the Loire’s heritage: the **vegetated sand island** to our right is the first of several examples. “A river of sand where little water flows”, the Loire actually has many sand islands reshaped by flood waters and erosion. These are naturally formed and are left untended. They are **the preferred habitat for birds**, such as terns, that nest on sandbanks.



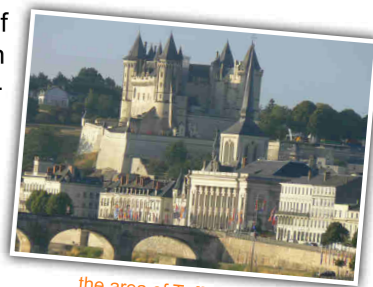
The vegetated sand island

During the boat ride, and according to the season, you may glimpse varying birds of Loire: Terns, Sand Martins, Little Ringed Plovers, Northern Lapwings, Redshanks, Kingfishers, Gulls, Olog’s Gulls, Little Egrets, Grey Herons, Great Cormorants, even a fish-eating Raptor or an Osprey, added to those you may also see ducks, butterflies and dragonflies.

The “wild” character of the Loire can be likened to the difficulty there is in **navigating the river**: insofar as not having enough water depth all year round in the channel, the Loire, from Sully-sur-Loire to Ponts-de-Cé, is not a state-recognised waterway. However, beacons with **red and green buoys** are placed by the department of Maine-et-Loire so as to facilitate the river traffic during drier periods.

Saumur and the Loire: a suitable environment

Known as **the area of Tuffeau stone**, Claudel (A French Poet) once said “the nice, white and soft stone which is the pride of France”. The town of Saumur enjoys about **1,200 kms of underground caves and troglodyte galleries**⁴. Given that the galleries have a constant humidity and temperature all the year round, they are used for various purposes: the culture of **mushrooms**, cellars and housing. The cultivation of mushrooms began in Saumur in 1909 (since it required a substrate soil based on horse manure, a 16 °C ambient temperature, a constant humidity and good ventilation, and the caves of Saumur offered all of those). As far as **sparkling wine** is concerned, the crisis which the



the area of Tuffeau stone

¹ Statue of the Virgin Mary holding the corpse of Christ on her lap once taken down from the Cross of the torture.

² Protestants do not worship the Virgin Mary.

³ Congregation founded in France in 1611 by Cardinal Pierre de Berulle. It was inspired from an Italian model. It was formed of priests who lived together and worked for the sanctification by preaching and teaching.

⁴ The word “troglodyte” comes from ancient Greek “τρογυλοδύτης”, from “τρώγλη” (cave) and “δύειν” (penetrate, dive into), and designates every population that dwells in caves or carves houses in the rock.