

SAINT GILLES CROIX DE VIE

Le Chemin de la Sardine



1

Chemin de la Sardine « On the sardine trail »

The sardine of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie is the emblem of this maritime quarter and stands out as it is the first saltwater fish to obtain the distinguished "Label Rouge" - Red Label award. Discover the maritime quarter via 14 historical and traditional information points which covers the sardine. An unusual self guided tour is accessible by foot.

2

From the harbour to the fish market : a history of sardine fishing

The maritime industry at Saint Gilles Croix de Vie does not date from today. Sardine fishing started in the region and on the Atlantic coast in the 17th century. In the first half of the 17th century, the Moors introduced a fishing technique which had a profound effect on the region's economy. Straight net fishing, allowing the capture of large quantities of sardines. Thanks to this process, sardine fishing experienced a major development at the end of the 18th century reinforced by the invention of conservation methods, including in 1840 conservation in oil. The Canning factory makes the sardine industry very prosperous. In 1888 there were 13 canning factories in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, compared to just one today: the Gendreau cannery.

The port of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie is one of the main sardine ports in France. Since 1990 la Confrérie de la sardine (Sardine Management Association) has become the ambassador for this little silver fish.

Sardine fishing techniques today:

From the spring time until late autumn, pelagic trawlers always work in pairs, targeting shoals of sardines by using a trawl stretched between the two boats.

Pairs of pelagic boats (mid-water trawling):

Roumasse and Natif II - Prométhée and Jérémie Simon
 Harissa and Galérien - Bozo and P'tit Lou

From Monday to Friday at the harbour fish market:

Sardines sold directly from the Bozo (fishing boat). Times may vary for boats returning to port.

You find yourself in and around the Semvie port area and the fish market... Places are under video surveillance.



3

Landing Quay

Renowned for fishing blue fish (sardines, mackerel, anchovies, horse mackerel...), the port of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie has a fleet of quarantine ships which employ a hundred fishermen. It is the only port in France to have been awarded in 1998 the Label "Site Remarquable du Goût" by four Ministries (Agriculture and Fisheries, Tourism, Culture, Ecology and Environment). This label honors a well established sardine tradition. Sardine fishing in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie was also listed as part of the Cultural Heritage of France by the Ministry of Culture in 2018.

The boats have a variety of activities and practice several types of fishing: trawl, pelagic, trap, line or net... Each year, nearly 3000 tonnes of sardines are unloaded.

4

The Marina (between pontoons 5 and 6)

You will find yourself in front of the Port La Vie's Harbour Office. Equipped with 1000 moorings on floating pontoons and 160 stopover moorings, the Saint Gilles Croix de Vie marina draws its strength from the fact that it is accessible at all tide times. Situated opposite the Ile d'Yeu, it has for many years already, become one of the main French ports on the Atlantic coast.

5

Traditional sailing: The Hope

The Hope is the star of the old tall ships of Port La Vie. Built in 1943, this former red-sailed coaster used traps to fish in the waters around Saint Gilles Croix de Vie and Ile d'Yeu (shrimps, lobster, crayfish...) until the late sixties, when it was decommissioned. Since 1997, the Hope has been listed as part of the Maritime and Industrial Heritage of the Vendée. The town of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, the owner, has entrusted its management to the Suroît association.

6

From marker to marker

Marker 6 relates the story of the canning factories. On the "Quai des Greniers, the architecture of the old industrial building (the confiserie, marker 5) are very distinguished. Today, this unusual building has become a place of cultural events for the town. Marker 4 will introduce you to the Bénéteau boatyards.

7

Kiosque Benjamin Bénéteau

Panoramic view of the « Quai du Port Fidèle ».

8

Rue de la Garance and its ballast stone walls

These walls, which are made from a wide variety of stones, reveal the various maritime routes from the port, that during the 16th century European maritime trade was a dominant activity.

Since ancient times, coastal shipping has gone on along the coast of France, from Portugal to the Scandinavian countries, passing through the ports of Croix de Vie and Saint Gilles sur Vie. Shipments of wine, cereals, salt and wood were exchange for iron and tin, leather, wool and linen. In order for the boats to keep their capacity plate (plate indicating the weight capacity of the boat), had to embark 10% of their total weight in the form of ballast stones or merchandise. These stones from different countries were sold to constitute the ballast of the boats.

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La Maison du Pêcheur

Here you will discover the history of fishing in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie. La Maison du Pêcheur transports you back to 1920 with antique furniture, vintage clothes, everyday objects...

Open from 1st April to 30th September, from 2.30pm to 5.30pm. Closed on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday - Tel: 06 45 57 54 80

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Quartier de la Petite île, known as « du Maroc », rue Émile Zola

The origins of the Quarter de la Petite île, known as "from Morocco", refer to the town's maritime past. In the 16th century, the Moors descendants, nicknamed Moroccans, fled their country due to religion related conflicts. These newcomers taught local fishermen a new technique: straight net fishing. This would have a profound effect on the economy of the region.

11

Sainte Croix church, Place Guy Kergoustin

The Sainte Croix church, built in the 19th century has a Romano-Byzantine architectural style and displays a strong maritime theme.

Henry Simon, artist-painter, ceramist and a major decorator in the region, has created the stain glass window which depicts "la vierge au filet" the virgin Mary with fishing nets, as well as a fresco on the history of the little Louis. The magnificent pulpit will also catch your eye. Its creator is a self taught sculptor: Arthur Léon des Ormeaux.

The "Place Kergoustin" where every Wednesday and Saturday mornings you can take advantage of the market to buy some fresh sardines.

12

Quai de la République: The « Perle des Dieux » shop

Gendreau group has passed down its knowledge and heritage through 4 generations. The "Perle des Dieux", is the groups Top of the Range product.

A network of delightful shops, a tradition and a savoir-faire, offering the sea at its best.

13

La baie de l'Adon (the Bay of Adon)

Saint Gilles Croix de Vie owes its position as a maritime port to Marie de Beaucaire, Barones de Riez, who carried out the first work on the port to establish the economy of the town.

- Between 1601 and 1610: Marie de Beaucaire, built le Quai Neuf de Madame in the "Bay of Adon", the outer port of Saint Gilles sur Vie
- In the 1950's: the construction of several docks
- In 1995: the construction of a Fish Market according to European standards

The "Tour Joséphine" lighthouse was built in 1850 in tribute to Joséphine Beauharnais, the French Empress.

14

Inner harbour for small coastal boats

- Forty boats for a hundred fishermen
- Main species caught by these small coastal boats:
 - Line fishing: whiting, conger eel, pollock, bass
 - In traps: crab, spider crab, lobster, shrimp
 - In nets: eels
- Types of fishing: the fleet is made up of a variety of different boats such as crabbers, long liners, trolling, trawlers, seiners.

THINGS TO DISCOVER

