

ANGERS VISITORS GUIDE



Polytech Angers International Week 2024



FOREWORD



Dear International Week Participant,

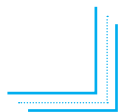
We are delighted to offer you an inside look at some of the most interesting places to visit, dine or go shopping in Angers – all chosen by Polytech Angers students.

As part of their English travel writing project, third year Health students were asked to choose and describe one place in or around Angers that they would especially recommend to our Erasmus+ partners. From lively pubs to vintage clothing boutiques to hidden beauty spots, our students share their favourites, which may become yours as well. More than just a list of tourist attractions, this guide hopes to capture the essence of Angers through the eyes of our students. We hope this project will inspire you to explore and discover just some of the treasures in and around Angers.

Wishing you a pleasant visit,

Michael O'Connor
Polytech Angers Language Services Coordinator

April 2024



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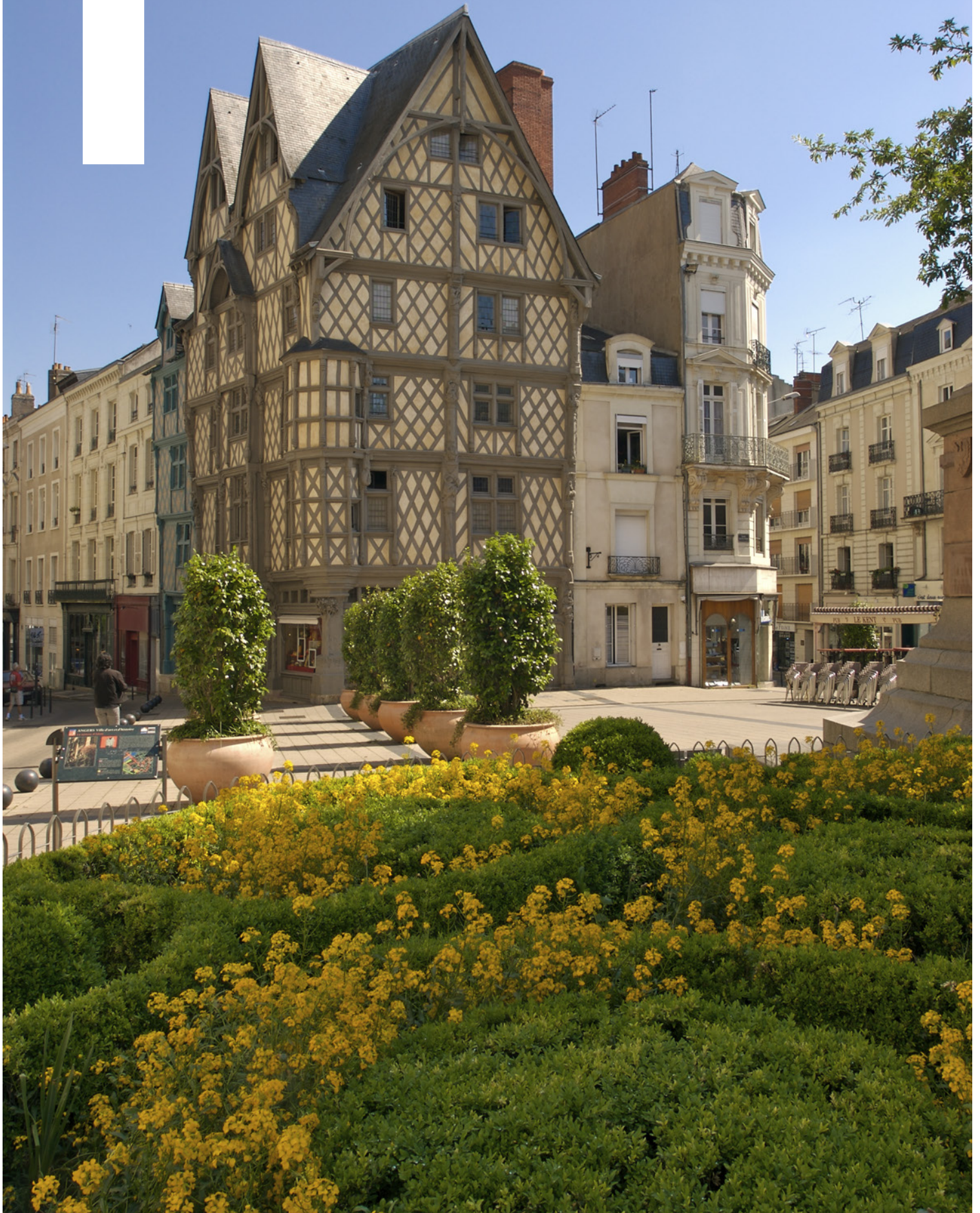
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1 SIGHTSEEING



A journey in old Angers: the historic center

My journey begins on a mild day in April, during the sweet Angevine spring, on the most iconic bridge of Angers, the Pont de Verdun. As I arrive from the Trinity church, I stop to admire the breath-taking landscape. The most famous monuments of Angers make postcard-like scenery. The Maine river flows peacefully under the old bridge still used by hundreds of travellers after so many centuries. The keeper of the bridge, a statue of Nicholas Beaurepaire, looks at each visitor with his sword and inquisitive glance, deciding whether we are worthy of crossing his bridge or not. Behind him, St Maurice's Cathedral proudly stands, towering over the city. The old town surrounds it like a flying ancient city, preserved from the flow of time. Finally, far across the river, I can see my final destination for this trip: the castle of Angers and its famous round towers made from typical local black slate and white tuffeau limestone. Before leaving the bridge, I stop to look at a slate indicating the different flood marks throughout history. I realise how lucky I am not to have lived in the 1920s, for I would have wet my shoes crossing the bridge.

Arriving on Quai Ligny, I see a beautiful promenade running between the Maine and the gigantic old town's walls which are covered with ivy and bushes. Occasionally, old pathways appear, carved into the cliff, at points blocked by rocks or metal fences. Where do those mysterious pathways go? No one knows, maybe cellars, or even catacombs. After passing those gloomy, yet intriguing tunnels, I wander under a long arbour covered with wisteria, climbing roses, and blossoming cherry trees. As their gentle smell reminds me of springtime of my childhood, I return to the fountain, ready to make my way up to the cathedral by climbing the Montée Saint Julien.

Upon arriving at the last quarter of the hill, I notice more steps to the right side leading to a narrow street between the large medieval houses. I decide to go off the beaten path to the Rue Donadieu de Puycharic. At the top of the stairs, the old town's tiny, twisting cobblestone streets is like a maze to me. As I walk besides the tall medieval houses covered by red and green ivy and their heavy wooden doors, I feel at times small and at other times big and imagine myself back in the medieval ages. Those streets must have been so full of life and joy then, whereas they are so quiet nowadays.

I finally manage to escape this Alice in Wonderland maze and reach my final destination. The view of the castle is astonishing: Sunbeams reflect on black slates covered with moss and ferns. Down the rampart runs the long empty moat, now planted with flower. Ivy growing on the walls reaches a large promenade, past large properties with wisteria blossoms climbing up walls and twisting around fences. Eventually, I decide to walk towards the north side of the promenade and its stunning view of the city. As I stand over the Maine river, I let my gaze wander, only to discover the Angers quays, their typical Guinguettes riverside restaurants, contrasting with the modern architecture of the new theatre, whose tall glass walls reflect the shining river. I then wonder which direction to take in order to complete this particularly pleasant and memorable experience.

Gabriel Braux

N.B. Start the tour at the Trinity Church in La Doutre neighbourhood, working your way across the river and up to the castle. Map available at Angers Tourism Office : 7 place du Président Kennedy



Le Quai: Sights and Sounds

I am walking along the docks of Angers, passing in front of La Péniche, another restaurant called Mamie Fada, and bars, one of which is called le QG, and I could see a huge building facing the river Maine. Le QUAI, as the Angevins, the people of Angers, like to call it.

In front of the Quai, skaters are trying new tricks add a street-style atmosphere. Muffled Hip-Hop music accentuates this feeling. Four break-dancers are revising their choreography for the third time.

The glass facade lets passers-by see the modern interior. Big neon-lights disclose the name of it: « LE QUAI ». A loud crashing noise interrupts my train of thought. One of the persistent skaters has just done the Ollie that he had been practicing for twenty minutes.

Entering in Le Quai, I observe a surprising glasshouse inside the building, welcoming the artists who frequent this space but also the curious visitors who want to learn more about this piece of architecture. There are tables, chairs and some free space. A pleasant brightness fills the space of Le Quai and directs my inquisitive gaze towards the bar, closed today. Behind this atrium, two theatres welcome spectators for dance, theatre, music and circus performances. Research and creative artistic activities take place backstage. I can't see the dance studios but I can hear music and guess that artists are creating contemporary dance choreography.

A glass elevator takes us to the top of the building to an unbeatable view of the city. In the foreground, the Maine; barges float on the calm river. Walking along the rooftop, the visitor can see the old neighbourhood of Angers where protective ramparts surround the castle, and in the background, the top of the cathedral overlooks the city.

Turning around, the visitor discovers the terrace of La reserve, the rooftop restaurant. Surrounded by red sun loungers and wooden bar tables, clients are enjoying a glass of Soupe Angevine, a refreshing lemon-infused drink made with Cointreau, the local alcohol. One of the clients seems hungry. He has ordered tapas composed of French specialities : various cheeses accompanied by mouth-watering charcuterie. Of course, a basket of crusty bread complements this appetizer. Four people on a table further to the right clink their glasses together, saying joyfully 'Santé', the French version of 'Cheers' .

Marie Baupin

Le quai - Cale de la savatte

A Serene Stroll: Discovering the Hidden Treasures of Le Jardin du Mail

The Irigo public transport agency, I have no intention of going back home, considering the clement weather, so rare these days. On my right, there is Le Jardin du Mail, a well-known garden in Angers, built in the 17th century, that I have never visited before. But now seems to be the ideal occasion. I cross the road and I come across the fountain; the water is clear, and the sound is calming. There are benches all around it, and clearly, other people also came to enjoy this spring-like weather. Two friends are each eating a pain au chocolat, while on the next bench, someone is reading, and on the other, an elderly couple enjoy the sun's rays.

Feeling like a part of the scene, I venture into the main path of the garden. Not only is the lawn perfectly mowed on both sides, but the vegetation trimmed as in a royal garden. Ancient statues stand in the middle of it, and they Leaving remind me of the Venus de Milo. You would have thought you were in Versailles or Villandry. Little did I know that the garden is surrounded by unattractive buildings that have nothing to do with those places. Speaking of royal gardens, Le Jardin du Mail was originally constructed to facilitate the aristocracy's enjoyment for "le jeu du mail", a game involving the use of a mallet to propel a ball, but the space quickly became a promenade. Eventually, in 1858, it assumed a new role as the venue for the Sixth Exhibition of industry, hence the construction of the fountain.

As I continue my journey, a bandstand appears. This and the fountain are central points of the garden. I climb the five steps and find myself standing there, without anything specific to do, just enjoying the moment. The sun is making interesting patterns on the ground through the iron railings. A group of tourists is also present,



attentively listening to their guide. While I couldn't pinpoint the language, I speculate it might be German or Dutch. What I can confirm is their evident captivation, likely engrossed in learning about the garden's history. I learned later that this bandstand hosted orchestras and music competitions in the 19th century. I can totally imagine people gathering to listen to music in such a conducive place.

Leaving the bandstand, I continue my exploration. On both sides of the pathway the first flowers are showing up, so are the bees and butterflies. The flowers are not randomly arranged; instead, they are planted in perfect symmetry and create a harmonious and vibrant carpet of colours. The birds seem to enjoy the sunny weather too, signing in a rhythmic dialogue, their melodies intertwining as if engaged in a conversation with each other. Surprisingly, the sound of the traffic is muffled, even in the middle of the city. At the end of the garden remains a long straight path, the Avenue Jeanne d'Arc, so long that you can't even see the end of it. I decide to end my visit there, having no motivation to continue on this uniform and never-ending path. Nevertheless, from what I can see, runners and dog owners seem to enjoy it. I backtrack, pausing once again to appreciate the beauty of the garden. On my way back, I make a promise to myself that I will return soon to admire all those flowers once they will have bloomed. Arriving at the tram stop, I feel content to have experienced such a timeless moment. It reminds me that even in the busy city, there are peaceful and delightful places, waiting for those who take the time to appreciate them.

Léna Colonnier

Jardin du Mail – Bd de la Résistance et de la Déportation



A secret picnic spot in the Parc St. Nicholas

Angers is one of France's greenest cities, with its many parks, lakes and forests. Among its oases, which provide a haven from the pressures of city life, are little-known hidden corners of paradise, tucked away between two footpaths. Would you like to enjoy a delicious picnic in peace, take a siesta lulled by birdsong, or simply observe the wonders that nature has to offer, away from the glare of cars, big city buildings and all that goes with them? I may have found the spot you need.

On a spring evening in the middle of the Parc St Nicolas, on the left riverbank, at the end of the first wood foot-bridge, along the main path, stands an enormous rock, worthy of the French Alps, between two leafy trees. To the left of this near-mountain hides a small wooden staircase, almost invisible to passers-by. Walk up the 37 steps that will take you to the top of this huge rock, where everything gets interesting.

Even before turning round to take in the view, feel the evening sun on your skin, which warms you perfectly. Then turn around, open your eyes, and look. Another universe, as if you have moved to another country. It's not the city you're facing, but an African nature reserve. Before making the most of this marvellous place, take

the time to settle in. Put your towel on the rocks, arranged so that you sit comfortably, and even lie down, and install your snacks around you. And now you're ready to soak up the calm, soothing atmosphere, which is also alive with all this natural life in motion.

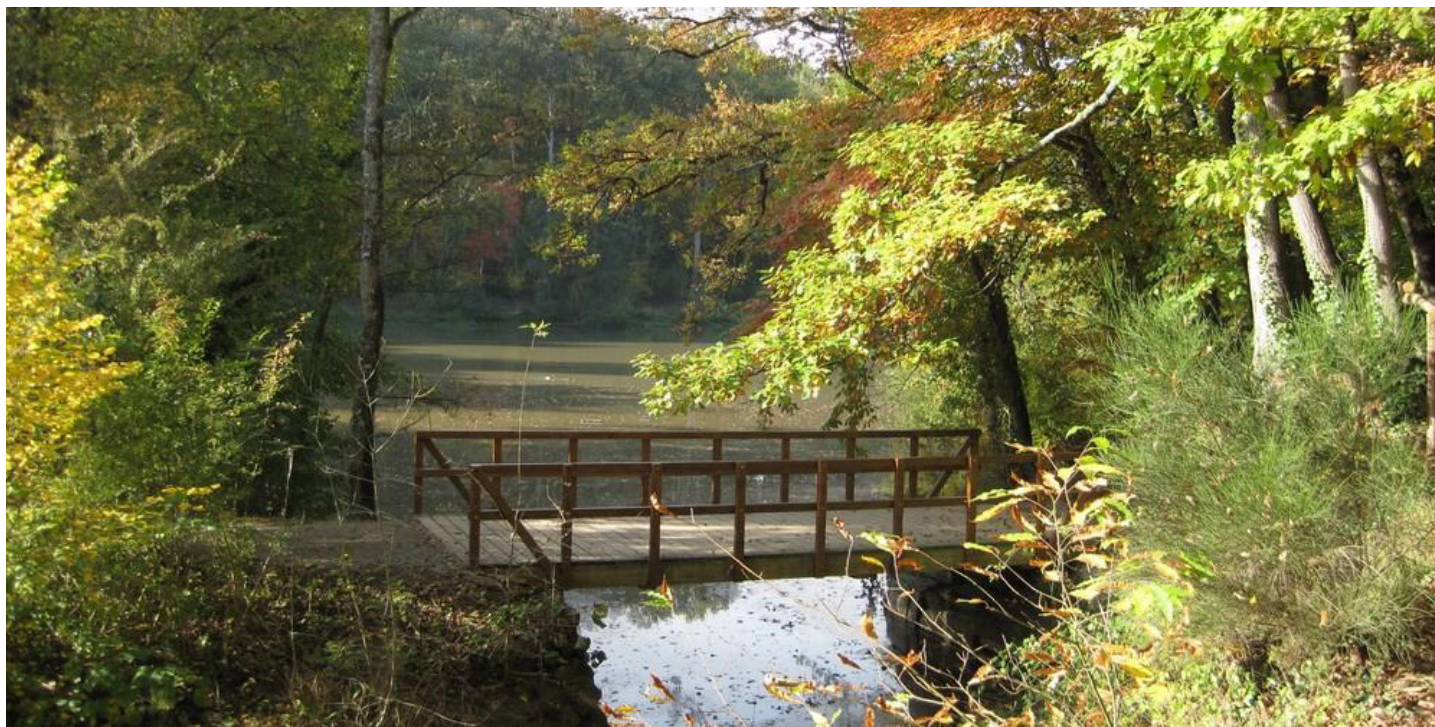
Dotted with water lilies and aquatic plants, the Etang Saint-Nicolas reflects the orange-pink evening sky. Quacking ducks glide gracefully over the water and herons fly elegantly over this vast expanse of water. The chirping of birds nestling in the branches overhanging the water punctuate the calm with a natural symphony. The tall trees, dressed in their finest spring foliage, are also reflected in the water, and the gentle breeze passing through the leaves create a harmonious melody. As you eat your cherry tomatoes and chips, the sun's rays warm your whole body, and the spring breeze keeps you from getting too hot. You're there, with no human noise, just the sound of birds, wind and water, enjoying your best picnic, with no stress and no deadline for leaving. You're just free.

I recommend that you discover this place on a spring or summer evening, to make the most of it. And if you do go, please don't leave any rubbish and don't disturb the local flora and fauna. All that's left for you to do is enjoy your picnic.

Sibyle Sarradin

Etang Saint Nicholas - Entrance by the Rue Saint Jacques/Avenue Marius Briant

N.B. If you don't manage to find the staircase that leads to the spot, here are GPS coordinates: 47.482678 – 0.598041



Le Jardin des Plantes : Getaway in a green bubble

I believe that the Jardin des Plantes is a must-see when visiting Angers. There are a lot of elderly people coming for a breath of fresh air between two sunny spells, you may also come across young people enjoying the romantic atmosphere. Of course there are many families who come, so that the children can have fun, and the last category of visitors are the sports people who jog among the trees. But, if you are alone, like me, and just want to feel pleasure, walk far from cars, sit on the grass in the sun and read a book, it's the perfect place.

I am sitting on a bench, the sun warming on my back, and looking at my favourite view in this park, the animals. Indeed, in the garden, rabbits, goats, hamsters, and chickens, all live together. The cutest are the rabbits, which are smaller than hamsters and seem shy, constantly looking for a hiding place and following the big rabbits. Two children are trying to touch the goats through the fence, under the protective gaze of their mother. She makes sure they don't get bitten by the beasts.

Three students arrive, bread in hand, to feed the goats. The animal tries to grab the bread and nearly bites a girl, who squeals as she backs away. After observing people trying to attract the animal's attention, I get up and head for the free book exchange box. I read the titles of the books, looking for the one that will catch my attention and whose summary I will read. I start to read the back of a book, called *The elegance of hedgehogs*. I choose it because of its funny title. The back cover blurb talks about a freakish but amusing concierge, but it doesn't appeal enough for me to take it, so I put it down and walk away.

I cross the pathway and go to a kind of observation post near the play area. The parents are sitting in the sun, forgetting to worry about their children. The boys and girls race from one end of the play area to the other. Then I turn my head, close my eyes and listen to the sound of the water below. I can make out the sound of the water jets that are in the middle of the fountain but there is also a louder tone, more powerful, reminding me that the water comes from a small waterfall higher up.

So I head towards the source, I pass under an arch, then over a small bridge that crosses the trickle of water. I stop here, contemplating nature, which stopped by winter, regains its green colour. Trees welcome their leaves for a new year, flowers show their buds to the sun and birds fly from tree to tree, enjoying their freedom. The birds are singing, heralding the arrival of spring, a time of renewal. Everyone is excited to get out and enjoy the sunny weather and rising temperatures, but today, it's rather worrying because it's only the end of February. Le Jardin des Plantes is undoubtedly the place where the early return of buds is most visible in the city.

Marine Daniel

Le Jardin des Plantes – 39 Rue Boreau



From the Galerie David d'Angers to the rue Baudrière: a walk through another era in Angers

Eager to discover more of my new city, I decided to explore the close neighbourhood of my house during this sunny day. My exploration begins at the Galerie David d'Angers, I found myself attracted by the allure of this quaint gallery with its discreet entrance, eager to immerse myself in the secrets of its works of art. I quickly understand that the gallery is located inside what appears to be an ancient religious place. In fact, I was right, I learned after my visit that it is located the former site of the Toussaint Abbey, founded in 1040. The gallery is named after David d'Angers, known for his monumental sculptures and busts of historical figures. He was also a politically engaged artist, inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution. He left a significant artistic legacy in France. Best known for sculpting the pediment on the Pantheon in Paris, he chose to represent opposition figures, even revolutionaries, a controversial decision at the time.

Stepping inside, I was surprised by the calming, softly-lit atmosphere, that almost seems stuck in another era. The place is silent, and the stone walls of the gallery keep the cool inside, forcing me to keep my jacket on. I was impressed to see the huge *Guerre aux prisonniers* statues, facing the entrance of the space. The story behind the sculpture takes us back to the War in the Vendée Wars (1793-1796). I felt strong emotion looking at the expression on the face of the Vendée general Charles de Bonchamps. As the general lay dying, he pardoned a group of Republican prisoners locked in the church of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil. The artist's father is said to have been among them.



In reality each piece seemed to tell a story of its own, inviting us to embark on a visit of imagination and creativity, from ordinary plaster busts to vibrant and complex sculptures. It wasn't just the artwork that captured my attention; it was the sense of inspiration and serenity that permeated throughout the gallery. As I walked through the exhibits, I found myself engaged in conversation with fellow art enthusiasts, sharing anecdotes about their favourite pieces or the stories of the people represented. I happily noticed that the space offers a private and intimate atmosphere where you feel free to lose yourself in the artistic world for one or two hours.

After exploring the gallery, I decided to continue my adventure, eager to discover more of Angers' hidden places. I walk up the rue Toussaint, past charming townhouses and curious medieval architecture, marvelling at the intricate details of the historic cathedral on the Place Freppel. My neighbourhood visit continues past the rue St Aubin, to the Boutique Candide, a small and quiet shop in the Rue de Baudrière. As I step inside, I am greeted by a symphony of colours and textures and many shelves on which objects, books, postcard and even wonderful seashells rest. This boutique is like a huge attic of little treasures to tickle your curiosity. I feel as if I had become a child again, eager to touch everything. From delicate jewellery to ceramics and second-hand clothing, each piece is a testament of an object that has already lived a life, and which is only waiting to live another.

Perhaps the most memorable aspect of my afternoon in Angers was the people I met along the way. From the friendly shopkeepers of Candide, eager to share stories about their shop, to the visitors of the gallery exchanging art anecdotes, they made my experience special and pleasant. All this surprised me in a way that only Angers can.

Elisa Cecchi

Galerie David d'Angers – 33 rue Toussaint



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FOOD & DRINK



Holly's Diner: a trip to the past

It is a cloudy Sunday afternoon. I am walking in the streets of Angers, daydreaming, when I catch sight of a pastel blue and pink sign. I approach the building and discover what is now one of my favourite places to eat in Angers: Holly's Diner, a retro American restaurant.

Standing in front of the door feels like encountering a real-life glitch in the Matrix. I can hear the cars and the people around me, see the Starbucks and the H&M out of the corner of my eye, and smell the traffic fumes, but right in front of me is an American restaurant straight from the 1950s. It's like finding a pink Lego piece in the middle of black ones.

Curious, I move forward and pass through the door. It feels like stepping through a time portal straight into the past. The first thing I notice is the sound of conversations overlapping with music and the clatter of cutlery. In front of me is a long metallic bar covered with drinks, glasses, bottles, and drink dispensers. On my left, in front of this bar, placed on black and white tiles, are white tables and red and pastel blue benches. On each table, within easy reach, is a paper napkin dispenser, ketchup and mayonnaise bottles, salt, pepper, and cutlery. On my right is a vintage Shell gas station pump.



As I look up, I see all the elements that transport me through time: red leather seats, paintings of Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and Apollo 11, vintage pictures, and pastel colours. Strangely, a yellow vintage fridge is placed in the middle of the room. A waitress goes down the stairs to the second floor and stops to seat me. Once again, everything is authentic, she wears a pastel pink dress with a name tag and a waitress cap.

I receive the multi-page menu and observe the variety of choices offered to me. There is something for everyone, whether in food or drink: milkshakes, cocktails, waffles, cakes, ice creams, a variety of burgers, tapas, salads, or sandwiches among many others. I can't help but recognize how American this food looks.

While I enjoy my wonderful chocolate banana pancakes with my magnificent strawberry milkshake, I immerse myself in this retro atmosphere, lost in a bubble in the middle of space and time. Once finished, I go to the counter to pay, delighted to chat with the smiling staff, then step back through the time portal, squinting because of the sun. Then I open my eyes, back to the 21st century.

It is almost like if I turn around, the restaurant will suddenly disappear, as if the glitch was never there.

Axelle Dziubanowski

Holly's Diner - 2 Pl. Mondain Chanlouineau



Heaven for the senses: La Doutré open-air market

Every Saturday morning, I make sure to wake up early to as not to miss the market in La Doutré. Located in the square Grégoire Bordillon, there you can find both peace and discord. Tired but excited, I get out of bed, get dressed, and leave my apartment. A mere fifteen meters away stand the first stalls, surrounded by people of different generations patiently waiting their turn. It doesn't take much time before a wave of aromas tenderly warm my nose, a thrilling mix of fresh traditional Breton buckwheat pancakes, roasted free range chicken, many different cheeses and handmade French pastries. I start my journey in this exotic land at the cheese stall. As always, both of the stall's owners smile at me and advise me on the new treasure I should try this time. A case in front of me protects a palette of coloured cheeses: a dignified grise d'Anjou stands proudly next to a mouth-watering old traditional mimolette. I finally decide to take half of an alien looking Bleu de Gex, with a really well-seasoned aroma that would beautifully fits in a sauce au bleu. Having acquired my first guilty pleasure, I head directly to the vegetable stall.

There's something magical about this place, a feeling of security served with an overwhelming longing for discovery. People wander through the marketplace light-heartedly, some talking lightly with strangers about the weather, cloudy as always. The marketplace may be one of the very few places in France where perfect strangers actually chat with each other genuinely about anything. The atmosphere it creates embraces the whole square. As his father calls for him, a young child slaloms amongst legs, trying to catch his playful dog. An old lady politely asks me to read the price of carrots while the stall owner struggles with her wooden crates, full of fresh eggplants.

Finally, I decide to finish my route by wandering around and observing my surroundings: a family of four is waiting for their Moroccan sandwiches that a kind lady is making on the stove in front of the customers. An old couple calmly argues about which cut of meat they should bring home for dinner, to the butcher's great amusement. He then offers to give them both cuts at a little discount.

At last the sun timidly shows itself from behind the grey clouds, its sunbeams reflecting on the dewy ground. The temperature instantly seems to rise and a shiver goes up my spine, waking me up slightly. I head to the fish stall where a stocky fishmonger carefully wraps cod and cuttlefish for a mother of two, who is desperately trying to contain her children's energy and noises. With my bleu de Gex and a leek that I bought from the vegetables stall, I then start heading towards my flat where I will prepare the sauce for lunch. Having such a place every Saturday morning just next door really is energising and always marks the start of a great weekend.

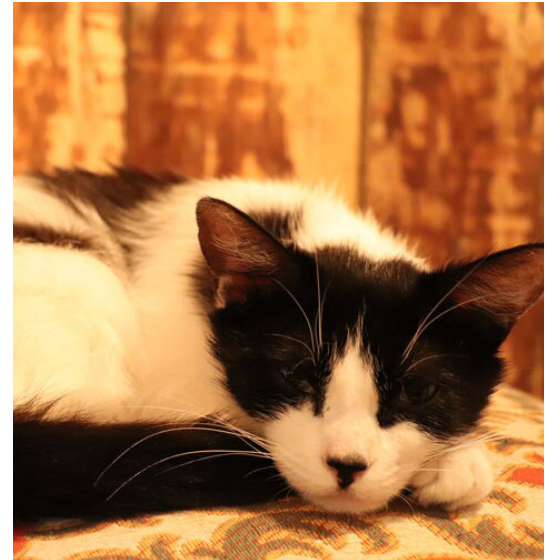
Léo Lacrouts

Marché de la Doutré-Saint Jacques

Place Grégoire Bourdillon (Thursdays 8 - 1:30) / Place du Docteur Bichon (Saturdays 8 - 1:30)

For a full list of Angers open air markets : <https://bit.ly/Angersmarket>





Cats & Cookies: the cat's out of the bag

Like every Thursday afternoon after our sport session, we have free time. My friends and I had spotted this cat café several months ago and had finally decided to go there for a snack and to work on our group projects. The concept immediately appealed to us: the owners take care of abandoned cats, born on the streets or even entrusted to them by the city's animal shelter, and café visitors can enjoy a snack in the company of these felines. The café offers kittens and cats the opportunity to be surrounded, sheltered, and even adopted by families. After passing by this café's storefront many times since September during our walks, we finally managed to step through the door.

As the establishment was already known to be quite crowded on weekends, we feared that with the rainy weather of the beginning of December, other locals, families, and groups of friends wandering in the city centre would seek refuge in this café. After climbing up the hill of Rue de la Roë, we arrived at the small entrance to the cat café. Along the window, we could already see cats resting, far from the passing people in the establishment, kittens chasing each other between the occupied tables, and other felines perched high on wooden shelves. A first small vestibule allows customers to enter the café while keeping the cats from escaping.

When we finally enter the café, we come face to face with the order counter, behind which two baristas are busy preparing orders. In front of them, the pastry display offers us the delightful sight of cookies, brownies, and other homemade cakes. The young blonde waitress gives us a smile and indicates an available table. Descending the few steps leading to our table, we cross paths with the two young cats we had seen playing earlier. As I sit on one of the chairs, one of my friends starts to laugh. I look up and understand the source of her amusement: on her chair, an old tomcat with a grey coat sleeps peacefully, unperturbed. We then add a chair to the table so as not to disturb his nap (probably the 6th of the day).

As two of my friends go to order their snack at the counter while we keep our table, we observe the groups around us. On the long red velvet sofa next to us, three students seem to have had the same idea as us: with their laptops on their laps and their cup of tea on the coffee table, they also wanted to take advantage of this afternoon to work, have a snack and play with cats. Under their couch, a ginger kitten also observes the environment around him. Behind me, a mother and her daughter marvel at the black cat climbing on the small wooden perch above their table. Colourful fairy lights make the place even warmer. The girls finally return, both of them with a large cup of hot chocolate and a cookie on a plate. It's our turn to order: I've already spotted a gingerbread flavoured hot chocolate and a brookie. We order our snack and return to our seats to savour them.

As we finish our management project and move on to other work, our four-legged companion's nap seems to be ending: the cat stretches its back, seemingly ready to leave the chair, but it starts to move towards me. I gently move my chair back to avoid frightening the felines around us, and the old cat starts to climb onto my lap. He turns around and quickly settles back down. We're not ready to leave yet...

Fany Lecuyer

Cats and Cookies -13 Rue de la Roë

Les Halles: a place where sharing is essential

Having seen this place under construction for two years, I was very curious to discover what was hidden inside. Let me tell you about my first experience in Les Halles, a food market facing the Maine river, next to the Coeur de Maine esplanade, where people can either shop for food or have a meal.

At the start of my third year in school, as I go to class, I take a look at what is happening inside this building. A lot of local merchants are preparing their stalls with delightful fresh products. Sometimes I can smell bread and it reminds me of breakfast at my parent's house. I am very intrigued by all these flavours that blend together.

My friends and I have decided to eat there Friday, to get the weekend off to a good start. I join my friends and we come in this place which I was so excited to discover. When the door opens, it is a mix of different sensations, emotions, and smells. The ambient hubbub, the clatter of cutlery and glasses, and the smell of dishes from different countries create an atmosphere of sharing and relaxation, making us forget our week's work at school. It is exactly what we need. We discover each stall, trying to decide what we are going to choose. This place is perfect! If people don't want to eat the same type of food, they can choose different things at different stalls and come together at a table to share the meal.

There are so many choices, and all seem appetizing. The raclette and the tartiflette are made right next to fresh Iberic and Lebanese food. Spring rolls and bo-bun are prepared in front of a stall of amazing cookies. We want to try everything, but we must choose, and this is a problem. Finally, I opt for crab and chicken rolls with French fries: a strange mix but never mind, I will see if I made the right choice. With these delicious dishes, drinks are on sale, and we decide to have a glass of wine.

Groups of friends share the same long tables, interacting with other groups in a convivial atmosphere. The laughter echoing and the different tones of conversation bring liveliness and a sense of lightness to this already special scene. We find a place between two groups of friends, and we enjoy the moment. I begin my spring rolls and the emotion is powerful. This spring roll is one of the best I have ever eaten in my life. They are so tasty and succulent. The addition of the French fries right after is definitely not the best but by their quality, these two elements have their own potential, and I appreciate each. All flavours mingle and instead of being nasty, it allows us to enjoy each taste and aroma of all the great dishes.

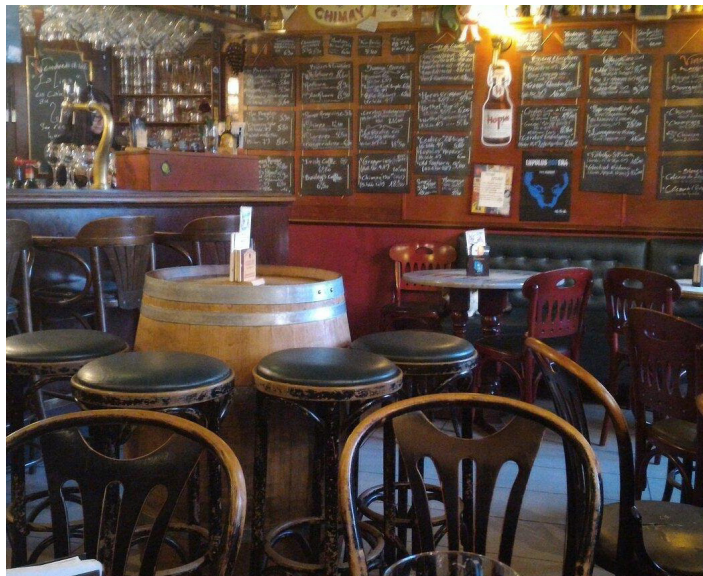
Jeanne Leclere

Les Halles Biltoki - 2 Rue de la Poissonnerie



Le Welsh: A good place to eat, drink, and play

On this cold evening, I decided to show a nice place to a friend who had come to Angers to visit the city for a few days. We went to a board game bar called Le Welsh located on the place Louis Imbach in the Saint-Serge neighbourhood. Despite my friend finding the bar a bit sad from the outside as it's a bit hidden, as soon as we walk in, we felt a good atmosphere in the bar. Subdued lighting and the sound of people playing games and having fun created a nice cosiness. Sometimes we heard people arguing about the rules of the game but it's all done good-naturedly.



Another friend joined us, and we went to the bar to order. While we were waiting in line, I took a look at the bar's decor, and on the walls saw lots of slates with the different types of drink written on them. At the far end of the bar, board games lined the shelves. Several flags were also hanging from the rafters on the ceiling. Next to the shelves were two narrow staircases. One led to the toilets and the other one to the second floor of the bar.

Looking at the menu written on slates, we ordered the local cocktail, la Soupe Angevine, two croque-monsieurs and a roast camembert. Made with Crémant de Loire, Cointreau, cane sugar syrup and a little lemon juice, la Soupe Angevine was a great discovery. For those who don't know it, a croque-monsieur is a toasted French sandwich consisting of ham, cheese, and bechamel sauce inside two slices of bread.

The waiter kindly indicated a free table on the first floor of the bar. I sat on the comfortable bench running along the wall, with my back to a large arched mirror. While we were waiting for our meal, I looked around and saw that people of all ages were playing board games or chatting. I also noticed that people were coming either as a family, a couple or with friends; it really was a place for everyone.

As we were talking about the party we had been to the day before, we could smell the delicious meal they were preparing. The waiter arrived with our dishes, and we were surprised by the size of the croque-monsieurs which were huge and delicious, and according to my friend, the roasted camembert was also very tasty. When we were done eating, we went to choose a game and decided to play skyjo, a card game of German origin. The aim of the game is to score as few points as possible. It is a simple yet subtle and terribly addictive game.

While we were playing, we suddenly heard music. I don't exactly know what style of music the band played, but it was very lively and more like folk music. The men and women in the band played different instruments such as violins, accordions, and guitars. I would say the musicians were around 50 years old, because some of them were just starting to go grey or already had white hair. I was surprised to see that this bar also hosted bands, which I think is a good idea. We enjoyed listening until we left the bar.

Anne Chapeau

Le Welsh - 25 place Louis Imbach

Feasting in paradise: unforgettable dining at Le Sens Restaurant.

Angers is one of France's greenest cities, with its many parks, lakes and forests. Among its oases, which provide a haven from the pressures of city life, are little-known hidden corners of paradise, tucked away between two footpaths. Would you like to enjoy a delicious picnic in peace, take a siesta lulled by birdsong, or simply observe the wonders that nature has to offer, away from the glare of cars, big city buildings and all that goes with them? I may have found the spot you need.

The moment has come after making a reservation two weeks earlier. After a fifteen-minute walk in the dark, facing a freezing wind, leaning against each other, my girlfriend and I find ourselves in front of a massive, unmarked wooden door, set back from the street, a small round doorbell giving no clue this is a Michelin starred restaurant, Le Sens. Curious for the facade of a Michelin guide restaurant, isn't it? We're at the right address.

After ringing the bell, an elegant young man opens the door. 'Good evening, sir, madam, please follow me, I'll take your coats... Follow me.

Thus we enter a dark corridor, a light further down like that of the end of a tunnel; the dining room appears quickly. Smells of food in the open kitchen to our left overwhelm us. The walls are rough but chic, with vaults made of large stone blocks, overlooking, and running along the room. Museum-like lighting creates intimacy at each table. The contrast between the corridor and the room is breath-taking and we are momentarily speechless. The dining room is small but cosy, with four tables on each side of the room, between the arches. We're seated at one end of the room, the last ones to arrive. Naturally, we look at each other and then at the table of varnished wood, decorated with beautiful purple origami flowers and a candle, and start to wonder if we are the only young adults here. What do the other guests think of seeing two young people among them? Are we worthy of going on a date in a gourmet restaurant? In any case, the waiter treats us as if we were regular patrons of this restaurant, and after serving us a tisane in a little blue cup to "awaken our senses and taste buds", he explains the concept. Our senses, especially the gustatory, visual, olfactory ones, will be our allies in finding the regional ingredients that make up the seven courses. The chef himself will come to meet us to explain the different dishes. Discreetly, a sommelier introduces a 'food and wine pairing' which we accept. The first (and not the last) dish, called a 'A bite of Sunday roast chicken' arrives, with soft, autumnal colours and comforting scents. Our appetizer was crunchy, melting, explosive in flavour. We are delighted, having never tasted anything so light and tasty.

The sommelier offers the first glass of wine, explains its colour. We listen, nodding, without understanding, we don't even know how to hold the glass correctly. This leads us to observe the other guests, two couples in their forties to our left, Galeries Lafayette bags at their feet. Are they stopping by this restaurant as if it weren't anything very special? Further on, a table of six elderly people, enjoying a meal, and presumably celebrating a birthday, and on the other side, four men in their thirties, a bit louder and more dynamic. Could this be a reunion dinner of old classmates? They were particularly relaxed as well as in their dress styles, compared to the others.

All the dishes were particularly sophisticated; a special mention to the scallops and the dessert with caramelized flavours, which respectively brought back nostalgia and a (re)discovery of simple ingredients. To bring matters to a close, we finished our dinner with a dessert made of coffee grounds, surprisingly not bitter, we definitely eat to our heart's content. The traditional "Can we have the bill, please?" comes. We are totally full, and we leave giddily, our wallet empty. It is 200 euros for two. My stop at Le Sens restaurant is now immortalized, because the menu changes with the seasons.

Théau Decamps

Restaurant Sens - 17 rue Beaurepaire, Quartier La Doutré





Komesu: A cosy restaurant in one of the noisiest streets of Angers

It was freezing cold that night so I decided to find some comfort. Walking the streets near the Rue du Mail, I finally stopped in a small

restaurant called Komesu, hidden amongst a mass of bars and typical street food restaurants. Immersing myself in this Asian-inspired atmosphere, I felt at ease straight away in this calm and snug place, away from all the noises outside. There were only fifteen tables or so and I instantly spotted the small kitchen at the back. Even if the menu mainly offered two types of dishes, I still had a hard time choosing. Whether ramen or a bowl of rice, the wide range of dishes available sounded delicious to me. Even the starters sounded great. We ordered karaage and miso soup to share, and then we both took the teriyaki chicken with rice. However, my boyfriend only had fried onions and cream cheese while I also had avocado and edamame with it.

While waiting for my order, I took the time to observe my surroundings attentively. References to Asian culture were plentiful without being nerdy. On one shelf, small Lego buildings representing Asian-type districts and streets were displayed. There were a few colourful anime-inspired posters on the wall. On another shelf, some manga figurines stood between recipe books. Some of those books were inspired by anime and others by Japanese culture. Except for the fancy shelves, the restaurant was rather sober and refined. There was an elegant bamboo counter in front of the kitchen, a dark blue tapestry behind it and pictures printed on a dark background representing some of the different bowls available. A light scent of lemon and rice, in addition to soft lo-fi music contributed to the relaxed and cosy ambiance.

After a little while, our dishes arrived and we had the pleasure of learning that one of the starters was for free, as they considered it too small. Well, I wouldn't have said so as it was plenty. All around me, small scenes of interest unfolded. The funniest one was my boyfriend doing his best to eat his rice with his chopsticks as they were the only cutlery provided. During our dinner, I also took the liberty of listening to other people's conversations. Two elderly women were sitting next to us, apparently tasting some new dishes. It was clear that they had no idea what they had ordered in the first place. At the back of the room, a young couple was having a passionate conversation, which was much more interesting to me. They were arguing about Studio Ghibli's movies, and fighting to decide whether Spirited Away or Howl's Moving Castle was the best. Of course, I didn't dare take part in their conversation although I would have loved to tell them it is Castle in the Sky.

Speaking of which, it was time to order dessert and I caught sight of one of the bubble teas directly linked to that film. I couldn't resist trying it and I wasn't disappointed. The drink was just lovely, with clouds of cream in a blue tea made from butterfly pea flowers. I then went to pay the reasonable bill at the counter. I was quite surprised to see Pepper, the owner's dog, sleeping under the bench, although I had not heard him throughout the whole meal.

This experience, which was most pleasing, reminded me of my childhood spent dreaming of those films. Because it was all so satisfying I made the decision to go back as soon as possible, perhaps for a brunch, as the menu offers other appetizing dishes that I would love to try some other day.

Lilou Comairas

Komesu - 36 Rue du Cornet

Chez Pont-Pont: A delicious break after visiting the Castle of Angers

On this sunny day of March, my mother and I decided to visit the Castle of Angers. After walking around the long battlements with, in my opinion, the best view of Angers and the Maine river, we were very hungry. Fortunately for us, the restaurants just opposite the castle drawbridge were open. We now had to decide where to eat for lunch. We were intrigued by a restaurant with an amazing terrace. Yes, a comfortable terrace in March, you have read correctly. It looked very pleasant, and we were very curious to discover the inside. After making sure the menu was as attractive as the terrace, we decided to eat at Chez Pont-Pont, although, in the end, we decided not to sit outside after all.

As we came in, a welcoming waiter took care of us and led us to a cosy table from which we could see the Castle. The modern decoration is a mix between chic and industrial design. Leather sofas, fabric armchairs and wooden chair come together in an artistic and plant-covered decoration. As soon as we were installed at our table, we felt the relaxed atmosphere of the place, almost like if we were at home, and enjoyed the moment. People came for a business lunch, and I realized by that this place would be great for different occasions, like a working lunch or an after-work, a family dinner, or even a romantic date.

The waiter brought us the menu, but we didn't know what to choose. The menu is a selection of seasonal and local products cooked in different styles: Japanese tataki beef, or Italian scallop risotto. We wanted to taste everything, so we decided to take two different starters and two different main courses and share them. We took the perfectly cooked tataki beef and the delicious homemade foie gras as starters and the steak and the wonderful risotto for main course. The food was served quickly and attractively presented. The taste was even better than the presentation. Special mention for the desserts: we ended this meal with amazing sweetness thanks to the mi-cuit cookie, still hot and melting.

We understand now why locals like this restaurant so much. Eating an excellent food served by nice people in a warm atmosphere and with a stunning view is always a pleasure! We look forward to going back to Chez Pont-Pont in summer to enjoy the terrace. Maybe it will be sunny enough for you to visit the castle and enjoy a relaxing break outside.

Mélissa Denis-Wurth

Chez Pont-Pont - 13 Promenade du Bout du Monde



3 SHOPPING



La Coloc : the shop as a time machine

Have you ever thought of using a time machine, which could bring you back to the 60s or the 90s? What if I told you that you can do so in Angers? Everything is possible at La Coloc, a shop where everything – from jewellery to clothing, down to the furniture and decor, is for sale. On this calm Monday afternoon, I walk down the Rue du Mail. Noticing the colourful shop window, I know I have arrived.

Pushing the front door of the shop, I feel the energy of the shop, in total contradiction with the street atmosphere. There are a lot of people in the room, and I have the impression that I am in my friends' kitchen. In the middle of the room, I see a 60's table Formica table and matching chairs and its brightly-coloured dishes. A yellow fruit basket is in the middle of the table, full of red plastic sweet peppers. Raising my head, I see at the end the room white wallpaper with thick, round lines in red, orange, and yellow. At that moment, I realize the theme of the moment, the 60s kitchen. In the corner of the room, I notice a shelf full of accessories, a giant collection of lapel pins and jewellery. Next to it are racks of clothing, new ones with touches of green, older looking ones in beige.

One thing attracts me: a little red fridge with a La Vache qui rit magnet on it. Round, with a steel handle, the fridge clearly confirms the 60's kitchen theme. I open it and find a lot of socks in it, all very colourful, at the price of 2€ each. It may seem weird to open a fridge and find socks, but there is one rule at La Coloc: feel free to search through every piece of furniture, as they are full of different objects for sale.

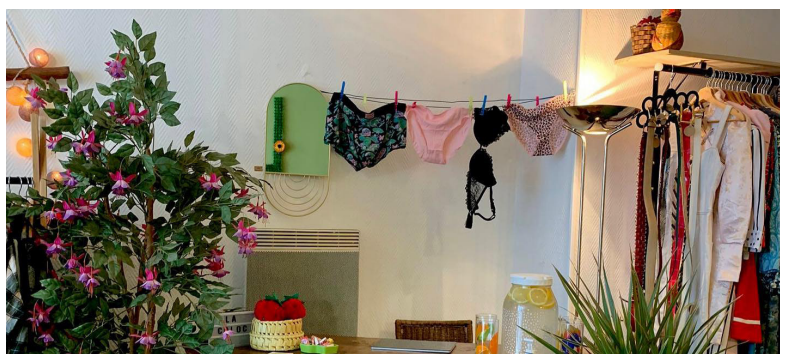
To the left of the room, there is a large piece of furniture that appears to be in Formica too. As a curious person, I don't hesitate to open all the doors, and I don't regret it: one of them is full of both new and vintage handbags. Another door is full of vintage dishes, which look like they have come straight from the 60s.

Wandering through the shop to the back, I find a corridor giving on to a smaller room with more clothes, furniture, and objects, all in the 60's spirit. I finally manage to leave after an hour of treasure hunting with a new vintage handbag and a pair of second-hand earrings. Since March, a new 90s-themed living room has it all : sequins, CD players, cassette tapes, old gossip magazines, a cube television, and video games. Fans of vintage, second-hand pieces, or even new clothes, you'll hit the jackpot in this magical place full of colour and memories of another time.



Charlyne Meron

La Coloc - 39 Rue du Mail





La Friperie du Tonnerre: the Eldorado of second-hand clothing

If you're planning a visit to Angers' magnificent and impressive Cathedral Saint-Maurice, and you're passing through the lovely and typical Place de Sainte-Croix beforehand, you absolutely must stop at La Friperie du Tonnerre. One of Angers' best-known monuments is, of course, the majestic Cathedral. However, it would be a shame to miss out on exploring the surroundings of this 13th-century vestige. In fact, behind this gigantic building, you'll find a small square called Place de Sainte-Croix, which, when the weather is fine, is home to several pleasant café terraces. To get to this square, I strongly advise you to take Montault street, adjacent to the impressive Foi et Cultures building of the Angers diocese, all in pinkish stone. Montault street is also home to a little gem for lovers of second-hand clothes, La Friperie du Tonnerre.

This antique shop's large, black wood-panelled front will catch your eye. The thick letters marked Candide will start you on the trip to Eldorado. Indeed, a few clothes are already out on a rack at the front of the store to start your mouth watering. If you dare to step through the doorway, you'll first be transported into wonderment by everything that surrounds you. The originality of this thrift shop resides in its location at the back of an antique shop. Take a few moments to wander between the tables and shelves, where you'll find a wild range of objects, from stacks of old books to small statuettes or stones. There's a particularly welcoming atmosphere when you spot the owners of this business, behind an old counter, at the back of the store. This charming couple in their seventies, always smiling, stand like sentinels at the gates of paradise.

The door they guard takes you through a courtyard to the back of the store, where you'll find the thrift shop. Run by the couple's daughter, this thrift shop abounds with treasures from all over. I have a deep passion for thrift shops. I've had the opportunity to visit many of them in every city I've lived in or visited. However, I've never experienced a thrift shop with so many clothes of such quality. The owner carefully selects each piece for us to enjoy. You'll find some well-known and costly brands, at very affordable prices. I had the chance to find a beautiful chic and electric blue dress from Caroll at very affordable price. What's more, the pieces are in perfect, like-new condition. The range of style propose by the shop is very wild from lovely, aesthetic, and colourful to classy and sombre. I still remember the elegant blue-dark striped pants I bought there from the good brand Comptoir des Cotonniers, and the joy I felt when I found it. It's the best value thrift store I know. I don't go there too often, because I know I'll automatically come out with a new clothing for my closet. If you like to bargain-hunt, this is an unmissable spot in Angers where I strongly recommend you stop.

Océane Kuharic

La Friperie du Tonnerre - 7 Rue Montault

4

OUTSIDE
ANGERS
& DAY TRIPS



By Train to Savennières

Jumping in the train for a few minutes, and feeling completely disoriented, is what I experienced going to Savennières. This tiny village, about ten kilometres from Angers is particularly pleasant to discover at the beginning of summer, and travelling there for an afternoon or a whole day could even appear as an enchanted break.

On a sunny Sunday morning, a surprisingly calm atmosphere reigned over the village. Although about twenty passengers got off the train, I could hear the birds softly singing. The unique scent of wisteria unexpectedly floated over the train platform. Surprisingly, there was no building on the platform, only dark metal rails, surely worn by time.

Going to Savennières to meet some friends, I headed for the town centre. The cobbled street was surrounded by thick stone walls, themselves covered with vines and climbing ivy. On the path, a local bakery displayed some typical breads, made out of different flours. As I hadn't breakfasted, I bought a beautiful golden baguette, still hot from the oven and I hastened to taste it. Exquisite!

As I moved through the city, I discovered many type of stalls, and I understood that Sunday was market day in Savennières. On the right were a fishmonger and a butcher, and opposite, a beekeeper promoting his honey, and a cheesemaker. Further along the way, a woman was selling handmade knitted caps and scarves.

Finally, I saw a fruit and vegetable seller with a stall full of beautiful peaches, melons and cherry tomatoes. Many people were waiting in line to buy local products, quietly discussing the weather or swapping family news. As this village was not that big, I assumed that the neighbourhood should know each other well. So many different colours, smells and sounds, all coming together to form a perfect harmony. Everything seemed to be calm and peaceful, the sun was coming to zenith. Suddenly, the sound of bells pulled me from my thoughts. BONG! BONG! BONG!

I suddenly saw my friends next to the imposing church. As we hadn't planned anything particular for the day and it was lunchtime, we bought some food on the market and decided to organise a picnic. We chose some fragrant cherry tomatoes, juicy apricots, different types of cheese and, of course, several pastries for dessert. We then reached the banks of the Loire to look for a cool spot, because the day was going to be hot.

Sitting under a weeping willow, the grass a little damp with dew, we ate, discussed and rested for the whole afternoon, observing people biking or running along the Loire.

I hold many pleasant memories of this day, and hope to spend more days like this in the future. Would I recommend this place to spend a good time? Of course I would.

Julie Vignot

Angers- Savennières by train in 7 minutes, numerous trains per day.



A Journey to Batz-sur-Mer

Prone to a tenacious boredom that gnaws at me, I decide, on a dull day in Angers to let myself be tempted by the call of the sea and so go to a place called Batz-sur-Mer, an Atlantic coastal town not far from Angers, which I had never had the opportunity to discover before.

Arriving there, the sky is grey but a few furtive rays of sunshine pierce through the clouds. Dressed in black, I am seized by the fleeting and vibrant caress of these winter rays that make my skin shiver and gently warm my heart. As soon as I step out of the car, I smell salt air, that sweet smell that has the power to dissipate all ills. I arrive at the seafront, called le sentier des Douaniers, constructed at the end of the 15th century. The first thing I see is an infinite azure immensity, the ocean. The waves crash against the coast forming an immaculate white foam that breaks up into countless shapes, inviting my imagination to escape.

Sitting there on rocks I contemplate the view and the mesmerizing way waves forms when I hear a distant melody. I look around to see where slightly hesitant voices are coming from, singing a song unknown to my ears. An elderly couple, tenderly embraced, sing, not facing the ocean, which would have seemed obvious, but quite the opposite. From where I am I assume that they are looking at an old house hidden between two others. I found myself imagining that it was their old vacation home where they went every summer and even at holidays or sunny weekends. It must have been their haven of peace, they must have taken their children there first, and then their grandchildren, all of whom must have created unforgettable memories there. I think that perhaps they had to sell it due to lack of means and that today, as they pass by again, they remember the good old days by singing what is perhaps their favourite song. This sweet melody speeds up sometimes and when that happens they dance a little, but I notice that they are not in rhythm and it makes me laugh softly. This peaceful scene offers a striking contrast to the wild power of the ocean that stretches as far as the eye can see.

Time passes, imperceptibly, as I am absorbed by the beauty of the spectacle unfolding before my eyes. As I head back towards the path, I notice that all the benches facing the blue immensity are occupied by people of all ages. Couples, families and friends, who are silently recharging their batteries in front of this landscape that captivates all the senses. I pass near a mansion that adds an incredible charm to this already incredible oceanfront. The facade of this true architectural gem has been damaged by sea air and wind. In fact, its colour is an old pink getting closer and closer to a mixture of white and grey. On the other hand, the back of the house is a vibrant flamboyant pink that incites reverie and transports the mind to distant, more flowery horizons. This may remind passers-by of a large field of vibrant pink tulips. The other two sides are invaded by a luxuriant ivy, a symbol of strength and permanence, which completes the majestic beauty of this dwelling. I take with me the imperishable memory of this escapade and the richness of the emotions it aroused in me.

Célia Manet

Batz sur Mer - 44740 Loire Atlantique



A Bike ride along the Maine and the Loire

One sunny day in spring I take my bike for a ride along the Maine and the Loire rivers. I leave the noise of the city and the chaos of cars, going through Balzac Park and pedalling along the river between the Maine and the Lac de Maine. As I go deeper into the path, the environment becomes quieter and I feel like I'm out of the city in no time. The noise of the road is replaced by the sound of birds. I come across a few runners taking advantage of the sun to go out and do a little sport. The terrain is flat, and I pedal effortlessly.

Arriving at Les Pruniers, I make a quick stop to view the river at the Pruniers bridge, used by allied troops in 1944 to liberate Angers. I get back on my bike to go on to Bouchemaine. The path is shaded and through the trees we can see the sun shining on the river. Barges, typical of the Loire landscape, move gently to the rhythm of the water. Arriving in Bouchemaine I pass under the railway bridge. The vegetation here becomes less and less dense and the village appears. People are lunching on restaurant terraces overlooking the Maine. From the path, the hum of voices is distinguishable, and the atmosphere lively and good-natured. Other people are picnicking on the grass on the banks of the Maine. Moving forward a little I pass by the nautical base, where canoers leave for the day to paddle the Loire.

After a few minutes, I arrive at La Pointe, which faces the confluence of the Maine and the Loire. The sunny, cobbled streets of the village have the charm of yesteryear. Along the path, above the low wall, I stop for a drink on a small square. The village is enchanting, and I savour this sunny break.

The journey continues along the Loire and the railway line. The landscape is relaxing and spring is in the air. I cycle between the vineyards and the river. The vines seem to fall from the hillsides and at the top of each estate we can distinguish a beautiful manor house. Now comes the Behuard point which separates la Loire in two. I soon arrive at my destination. The path then takes me away from the Loire and plunges through the fields. From time to time, a train passes close to me at full speed, catching me in a gust of wind.

I arrive in Savennières and turn right under the railway to enter the village following the Loire à Vélo cycle tour itinerary. The old town is lovely, topped by the oldest church in the department. The cobblestones shake my bike as I cross the village. After passing through residential neighbourhoods I pedal through the fields, the wind whipping my face. The sun dazzles me and there are vines as far as the eye can see. On the heights of the Loire Valley I can observe the hillsides on the other bank.

Suddenly I stop dreaming, and after almost an hour of cycling I go down through the village of La Poissonnière at full speed, zigzagging in the small streets until I arrive at the village port. Here people are walking in the sun along the cobbled jetty. With friends, family, by bike or on foot, people enjoy the Loire on sunny days. I go to the end of the port where children chase their shadows on the large solar clock drawn on the ground. The sandbanks are exposed and wood barges arrive in the port. I climb the few steps leading to the Guinguette des Tourbillons to eat something and hydrate before going home by train.

Margaux Morio

Start at : Parc Balzac, Bd du Bon Pasteur, 49000 Angers

Bike routes available on www.loirebybike.co.uk



A road trip along the Loire: Château de Serrant & Chalonnes-sur-Loire

Driving home, from Les Mauges to Angers in my old car, I passed through a series of fields and towns, each one seeming alike. Even if some towns looked livelier than others, most of them are laid out the same way, namely with a church in the centre of the main intersection, surrounded by an speed zone limited to 30kmh, and a bakery or a grocery store on the other side of the square.

But after 30 minutes of driving, the landscapes started to change, and the towns became bigger and bigger. At one point, I finally passed the sign for Chalonnes-sur-Loire. From there, I knew I had to stay focused on the road, and not on the landscapes, which began to look better. I knew I should pay particular attention to the two fixed speed cameras along the side of the road, as I continued to loudly sing my favourite tunes. I crossed the plentiful traffic circles, waited for the traffic light to turn green, and eventually crossed the Loire, said to be full of life with its thousands of fishes. Today, as could be expected on a winter day, the current was rougher. As usual, many pedestrians were walking along the banks of the Loire, smiling, and enjoying the slowly setting sun. Some of them even reached the famous Café Bondu, a sort of riverside café offering a view of the Loire and the town, looking very conspicuous with its string lights.

Then, I arrived at a second bridge, where another branch of the river flows. This bridge looks more industrial, and the river islands appear even wilder. Two or three cyclists were crossing the Loire along the bike and pedestrian bridge, brave enough to face the icy wind. I'm persuaded that biking along the river could be wonderful but not during this chilly season. At least wait until spring.

I drove past the first speed camera, then through Saint-Georges-sur-Loire and finally, passed by the Château de Serrant. This fabulous dwelling can only be observed for half a second from the road, yet its grandeur never fails to leave a lasting impression. Through the wrought iron portal, I could distantly see the huge castle dating back to the XVII century. The long avenue was intended to be crossed by refined guests, giving them the impression of being unique. Behind the courtyard and the castle, a vast park and an orangery can be visited.

I had visited it with my family and friends about a year ago. I remember taking photos in front of mirrors with my friends everywhere we could, such as in kids' rooms or bathrooms. We joked about how all those copper pans wouldn't fit in our future kitchens and speculated that the age of the books must be counted in thousands of years. Exploring the maids' rooms was quite disturbing. Contrary to my expectations, the rooms were well-furnished and didn't stand out like a sore thumb. It was fascinating to see how they complemented rather than detracted from the overall grandeur. In short, I thought that la vie de château no longer existed, but after this visit, I wasn't so sure of that. Back on the road, and not just in my thoughts, I continued my trip to Angers, and finally got back to my apartment, preparing for my completely normal life.

Zoé Merceron

Café Bondu / Chemin de l'Asnerie, 49290 Chalonnes-sur-Loire / Château de Serrant
Rte Départementale 723 Serrant, 49170 Saint Georges sur Loire



