

# Melun



Since Roman times, Metlosedum or Melodunum, which became **Melun** in the 6th century, have been at the meeting-point of both land routes and waterways. In the 10th century, the Capetians founded the royal château which remained a favourite residence of the **kings of France** until the Renaissance.

Five monasteries were set up in the city between the 14th and 16th centuries.

The economic role of **Melun** in the supply of flour to Paris grew steadily between the Middle Ages and modern times, as did its administrative role.

The Paris-Lyon-Marseille railway was routed through the city in 1847, industries set up there (Gruber Brewery, Cooperation Pharmaceutique) in 1910, and the National Gendarmerie Academy came to **Melun** in 1945. As a Prefecture, Melun has been home through the ages to famous figures such as **Abélard, Jacques Amyot, Louis Pasteur, Paul Cézanne** and others.

## Famous men

**Michel Henri Chapu** (1833-1891)

Sculptor of works including «Joan of Arc listening to her voices» and the bronze medallion representing Joan of Arc in the Saint-Aspais church.

**Etienne Chevalier** (1420-1474)

Chief Treasurer of France and executor of King Charles VII's will. Chevalier was a great benefactor of Melun, his patronage including a silver statue of the Virgin Mary, wrought silver and gold pieces, liturgical materials and monumental organs, destined to enhance the collegiate church of Notre-Dame.

**Eugène Gabriel Leroy** (1834-1908)

President of the Seine-et-Marne Society of Archaeology, Science, Letters and Arts, Eugène Ga-

briel Leroy was a great enthusiast for local history. As chief archivist and curator at the library, he collected and collated documents and other works relating to the history of the city and listed all archaeological finds made in Melun

**Jacques Amyot** (1513-1593)

A native of Melun, Jacques Amyot was awarded a Master of Arts in 1532. Appointed tutor of the future kings Charles IX and Henri III by Marguerite de Navarre, he was appointed Grand Chaplain of France by Charles IX in 1560 and became the bishop of Auxerre in 1570.



**Louis Eugène Godin** (1823-1887)

Sculptor. The marble statue of Jacques Amyot unveiled in 1860 in the court of honour of the City Hall is one of his works.

**Paul Cézanne** (1839-1906)

Paul Cézanne lived in Melun for a time at 2, Place de la Préfecture, where he devoted himself to

painting. «Le Petit pont», «Le Pont de Maincy» and «Paysage» are some of the works he painted during this period.

### **Things to see:**

#### **The «Pont-aux-Moulins»**

Built in the 12th century, the bridge had «hanging mills». The fine quality of Melun eels was attributed to the fact that they fed on flour which dropped from the mills set up on the bridge. Sadly, the mills and the eels are with us no more.

The «riding school» ovens

**Pottery manufacture** was a daily activity in Roman times. The «riding school» ovens, on the site of the cavalry riding school, has been restored and rebuilt in the Notre-Dame gardens.

#### **Notre-Dame collegiate church**

Listed as a historic building in 1849, Notre-Dame collegiate church is located on the Ile Saint-Etienne. A salamander, the emblem of François I, is visible on the west face, as is the initial of queen Claude of France. Rodin said that the niched front was «of infinite grace».

#### **The Pont Marat**

The pont Gaillard bridge, named after the President of the Court of Melun under the Directory, was a wooden bridge constructed in 1793. It was rebuilt in stone in 1842 and renamed Pont Marat.

#### **The Prefecture: former Saint-Père Abbey**

This former Benedictine abbey, founded in the 7th century, has now become the central administration building for the Département. Damaged by fire in 1420 and 1590, it was partially ruined. Reconsecrated in 1604, it was home to the Benedictines of Saint-Maur who rebuilt the church between 1665 and 1685. In 1801, the Département installed the Prefecture offices and Prefect residence in the building.

#### **La promenade de Vaux**

Completed in 1844, the promenade de Vaux started at the Pont Marat. Benches were installed beneath lime trees, boats were available for hire on the banks of the Seine, bathing huts were set up and became a resounding success. In 1930 the Promenade Vaux got gas lighting.

#### **Saint-Jean fountain**

Three allegorical statues represent the rivers Seine, Marne and Yonne watering the Département.

From the Hôtel de Cens to the Hôtel de Ville

The Hôtel de Cens (the Ancien Régime name for taxes) originally housed the Madeleine de Trainel nuns, and was then purchased by Maître

J. Riotte, Kings Counsel, and sheltered the Duke of Choiseul during the Revolution.

#### **The Place du Martroy**

In 1209, this square was the site of the torturer's house and the gibbet. It was the main seat of justice for Saint-Pierre abbey. The Place du Martroy was a busy square, with the wheat market, the Saint Bartholomew Mystery Play (performed for the feast of King Louis XI) and the excellent reputation of the La Galère Inn.

#### **Saint-Aspais church**

A church in the gothic style, with five naves. Look out for the 17th-century wooden statue of St Peter, 6 white marble medallions representing the heads of apostles and church fathers, a wooden effigy of Christ without a cross, fixed directly onto the wall, and the 16th-century stained-glass windows.

#### **Le Pont-aux-Fruits**

This bridge was constructed in the Middle Ages over the smaller of two arms of the Seine. It has a total of eight arches and is flanked by Le Grand Châtelet, a pavilion which was the seat of royal justice in Melun, and a gibbet. The bridge had already fallen into ruin by the time of the Revolution; it was demolished and replaced by a masonry structure. It was destroyed by bombing in 1944 and rebuilt in 1948, re-opened in 1950 as the «Pont Jeanne d'Arc».

#### **L'Hôtel de la Vicomté**

Built circa 1574, this building was bought by Nicolas Fouquet in 1654 as a residence from which he could oversee the construction of his château at Vaux-le-Vicomte. The Melun Museum has been located there since 1966. Exhibits include a collection of drawings showing the people and neighbourhoods of Melun in the 19th century.

#### **Medieval fortifications**

During the reign of Philippe le Bel, Melun was the second royal city, an administrative and supply centre and a seat of the kings of France. The island on which the castle stands was the first place to be fortified, and Philippe-Auguste made later additions. Their demolition began in the 18th century and continued up until 1851. Remains of these fortifications can still be seen in some Melun streets: rue de la Contrescarpe, rue de l'Eperon, and the rue des Fossés.