

# Moret-sur-Loing

**Moret-sur-Loing**, with a little over 4500 inhabitants, has an outstanding location on the edge of the **forest of Fontainebleau**. By the banks of the Loing, which empties into the Seine a short way downstream, this medieval town has an indisputable charm, drawing visitors both to its fortress and many monuments and its natural surroundings.

Its lively past has bequeathed a rich and varied heritage to the present day: Roman and medieval constructions, pages of the history of the **Kings of France**, visits from the Impressionists, the unparalleled location on the banks of the Loing... All these aspects make **Moret-sur-Loing** a place of cultural significance and a certain class which today attracts a large number of visitors.

## History

The village in the Middle Ages

The bridge and fortifications surrounding the city date from the **Middle Ages**, at a time when **Moret's** location meant military protection was necessary. The town, which Philippe I added to the young Kingdom of France in the 11th century, was located on its borders, adjoining the duchy of Burgundy and Champagne. Parts of the high walls and score of towers built at this time are still visible today. During this period, in the 12th century, the keep and Benedictine monastery at Pont-Loup were also constructed.

**Moret** was subsequently visited by many Kings of France, such as Louis VII, Saint-Louis, Philippe le Bel, Charles VII, Louis XI and Henri IV.

## The Renaissance

Henry IV fitted out the keep for his mistress, Jacqueline de Beuil, who became the Countess de Moret in 1604. Her Ladyship added some

beautiful touches to the village: the hospital and schools, inner and outer finishings for the keep, the Benedictine nuns and their famous barley sugar. The latter became a famous delicacy, and the Royal Court sometimes visited Moret simply to taste it. The recipe has remained unchanged from 1638 to the present day!

During the summer of 1664, the keep (also known as «the Big Tower» or «the Castle») was turned into a State prison. As the young Louis XIV began his reign, his Superintendent of Finance, Nicolas Fouquet, was made prisoner and



taken to the keep in Moret, escorted by 250 musketeers including the now-famous d'Artagnan.

The Franco-Prussian war and the visit of Napoleon 1st

In March 1815, Napoleon masterminded his reconquest of the kingdom and undertook his return journey from the island of Elba, at a time when Louis XVIII was in great political difficulty, under criticism from the opposition. The emperor stopped for a night at Moret in a lodge

opposite the then town hall. A commemorative plaque was subsequently installed to remind visitors and local inhabitants of this event.

### **The late 19th century - Impressionism and Alfred Sisley**

The artist **Alfred Sisley**, one of the great names in the Impressionist movement, lived in **Moret** from 1889 to 1899. A friend of Monet, Manet, Renoir and Pissarro in particular, Sisley had a difficult life and his work only gained real recognition after his death. His life story reflects a continual struggle to be recognised in the artistic circles of the time (see the summary of the script on page 8).

Pissarro wrote of him: "Now there is a great and good artist. I believe he is equal to the great masters. I have seen works by him of a rare breadth and beauty, such as Flood, which is a masterpiece". This canvas, entitled «Flood at Port-Marly» is now in the Musée d'Orsay, demonstrating the reversal in his critical fortunes. Sisley stands alongside Monet in his ability to depict the subtlest nuances of nature in impressionist landscapes.

His house is still standing in the rue Montmartre in Moret, a reminder to visitors of the significance of this man in the cultural life and renown of the town.

### **Heritage and Tourism**

When you visit **Moret-sur-Loing**, be sure to stop at the gates at the entrance to the town centre, the ramparts, the Keep, Notre-Dame church, the «François 1er façade», the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville and its renaissance houses, as well as Sisley's home (detailed descriptions of all buildings are available in an illustrated guide at the Tourist Office).

More local heritage information is available at the Barley Sugar Museum, at the Bicycle Museum, and at the Point Sisley, which offers an introductory educational tour of the artist's life and works.

Throughout the year, a wide variety of events also offer visitors the opportunity of taking part in the life of the village: the Son et Lumière Festival in summer, the Craft Exhibition and 1900 Fair in September, the Heritage Days and Humour Festival in October, the Christmas and Spring Markets, the Strip Cartoon Festival in April, and more. The Friends of Alfred Sisley association

puts on exhibitions, conferences, debates and trips, and supplies information about the famous artist and his fellow-travellers. Another association, Friends of Moret, organises similar activities which are more focused on the history of the town and its region.

### **Things to do**

A large number of themed guided tours, some with in-character guides, invite visitors on a journey through various times and events in Moret. Half-day and full-day tourist packages are available from the Tourist Office, combining several tourist attractions with a common theme as a way of exploring the region. Visitors can also choose stays based around sport (canoeing/kayaking, mountain-biking, climbing) art (Sisley's favoured sites, exhibitions), family leisure (cruise with commentary on the Loing, rowboat and electric boat hire), cultural exploration (guided visits, art exhibition venues...) and more.

### **The Barley Sugar Museum**

A museum devoted to the Moret-sur-Loing's famous Barley Sugar sweets. A collection and an audiovisual display illustrate the history and production of this confectionery.

### **The Bicycle Museum**

The Bicycle Museum retraces the development of the bicycle from its origins to the present day.