





The Le Havre Seine Métropole Area

On 1 January 2019, the community of the agglomeration of Le Havre (Communauté d'Agglomération Havraise – CODAH) and the communities of the Communes Caux Estuaire and the Criquetot-l'Esneval district came together to form the Communauté Urbaine Le Havre Seine Métropole. Covering the whole Pointe de Caux area, it brings together **54 communes** with a total of **275,000 inhabitants**.

An unusual and unique area, it combines a wealth of modern building and historic heritage with outstanding areas of natural beauty such as the cliffs of the Côte d'Albâtre and the Seine estuary.

Now reaching maturity, this forward-looking urban and rural area is developing a unique maritime, coastal and riverside identity covering **40 miles** of coastline and **66%** of agricultural land in a catchment area for **115,000** jobs.

At the forefront of international commerce in France, providing access to the sea for the capital and the gateway to the Seine valley corridor, the industry and port facilities of Le Havre Seine Métropole are essential to the country's economy.

In terms of tourism, there are two contrasting centres: Le Havre – cradle of Impressionism and a designated World Heritage Site for its modernist architecture – and Etretat, with its world-famous natural landscape. But there are also other communes within the Métropole that are of touristic and historic interest. In total, we welcome **2,200,000 visitors** annually.

Le Havre – History and Origins

The city of Le Havre grew and flourished around the port, which was founded in 1517 at the behest of the King, François I. Used for both military and commercial purposes until the French Revolution, it really began to thrive with the arrival of colonial and international trade (coffee, cotton, timber, etc.) and the construction of the first dockyard warehouses in France. Later, Le Havre became a transatlantic port for passengers heading to the New World and, being connected to Paris by rail, by

the middle of the 19th Century it had become a popular seaside resort.

In the bombing raids of September 1944, 80% of the city was destroyed, and its reconstruction - a national priority - was entrusted to **August Perret**, the master of concrete, who was to use the material to superb effect. Between 1945 and 1964, Perret's workshop, which comprised around a hundred architects, rebuilt the town

and it became synonymous with the revival of France. These experts created an exceptionally coherent urban landscape where the buildings express many facets of the same architectural language.



Le Havre – An Audacious World Heritage Site

On 15 July 2005, Le Havre gained ultimate recognition: **Le Havre - Porte Océane** was awarded **Unesco World Heritage** status for the quality of its modern architecture. This coveted prize was to assure its future and journalists even described it as **Manhattan-on-Sea**. To discover more about this architecture, visit the “Model Apartment” ¹ (a showcase of 1950s design and lifestyle) at the

Maison du Patrimoine (in the centre of town between the Volcan and the Hôtel de Ville), then head for the 17th floor of the tower at the Hôtel de Ville ² to admire the unique and stunning views over the town. It is a great way to understand the reconstructed street-plan of the town. Next, take Avenue Foch (Le Havre’s answer to the Champs Elysées) and admire the many sculpted plaques

that evoke the history of the town, before arriving at the beach (or turn left to see Perret’s masterpiece, St Joseph’s Church with its 12,768 stained glass windows ³ by Marguerite Huré). The beach and other key areas of the city are connected by the clean and fast electric tramway system which has substantially reduced polluting car and bus traffic.

Le Havre – City of Architects

The reconstruction of Le Havre has become a model of experimental modernist urban architecture both as a result of the coherence of its design - which covers 133 hectares (about 330 acres) and faces the sea both to the south and west - and its use of prefabricated concrete, the various pastel shades of which are brought to life as they catch the light.

Following Perret, **Oscar Niemeyer’s Le Volcan** ⁴ (incorporating a nationally renowned theatre and a library that is considered one of the most distinctive in France) continued the modernist theme with its soft curves complementing Perret’s straight lines.

Jean Nouvel’s design for **Les Bains des Docks** (a swimming pool complex with around ten pools inspired by Roman

baths) brings a noticed and noticeable architectural touch to the south-east of the town, an area where urban life is boldly recolonising a port area that is more in synch with the sheer size of ocean-going vessels. Nearby, the **Carré des Docks**, the conference and exhibition centre firmly places Le Havre on the map as a business travel destination. Opposite, the **Docks Vauban** (which date from the mid-nineteenth century) have taken on a new lease of life following their refurbishment by **Reichen et Robert** (specialists in converting industrial sites) as a place to shop and have fun. Here you will find around sixty trend-setting brands covering culture, fashion, sport and homeware alongside a multiplex cinema and restaurants offering cuisine from all around the world.

In the same area, looking very much like an urban ship, the **Ecole Nationale Supérieure Maritime** ⁵ maritime engineering college (designed by Pacôme Bommier and Laurent Pérusat of AIA Associés) stands as a figurehead alongside the Quai de Cameroun. On the other side of the Bassin de l’Eure, the **Cité Numérique** innovation centre, the **Ecole de Management de Normandie** business school and the **Sciences Po Asie** Undergraduate College (Champenois et associés) complete the new look of the area around the station. Finally, it is a short distance to the gateway to the town at the **Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie** (René Dottelonde et Phine Weeke-Dottelonde) which was built on an infilled section of the Bassin Vauban dock.

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Le Havre, Hidden Treasures

Fortunately, allied bombs did not completely flatten the town of Le Havre in 1944 and a few iconic buildings emerged unscathed to bear witness to past centuries of Le Havre's history.

The unmissable **Maison de l'Armateur** ¹ ("the ship-owners' house"), which is opposite the fishing port and the ferry terminal, is one of the few remaining traces of 18th-century Le Havre. Built on five levels around a stunning light well, it is neither exactly a museum nor exactly a private house. Visit it to discover how an 18th-century merchant lived and worked.

The **Hôtel Dubocage de Bléville** ² museum, located at the heart of the Saint François quarter by the water, was built in the 16th century by the Italian architect Girolamo Bellarmato at the request of King François I) and became the property of the mariner Michel Joseph Dubocage de Bléville (1676-1727). It was on his return from a long trading voyage to the Pacific via Cape Horn that he bought the town house that now bears his name. After altering and enlarging it, he moved in with his son and set up a major sea trading company and cabinet of curiosities. Visit his home to learn about the history and development of Le Havre and its people.

The **Cathedral of Notre-Dame** ³ is a mix of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles and is the oldest building in the reconstructed town centre of Le Havre. Construction began in 1575 and was completed in 1638.

Over the centuries, it suffered damage during the wars of religion and at the Revolution, and then in 1944 it suffered the ravages of Allied bombing. However, it was decided to save and restore it.

In the 6th century, the **Abbaye de Graille** ⁴, perched on the cliffs to the north-west of the city, was originally a hermitage, then in the 9th century it became a place of pilgrimage when the relics of Sainte Honorine were moved there to protect them from the invading Vikings. In the 11th century, Guillaume Malet de Graille founded the splendid buildings we see today on his victorious return from the Battle of Hastings. The church shows all the characteristic features of Norman Romanesque architecture, with the exception of the choir, which was rebuilt in the Gothic period. The ensemble is surrounded by beautiful gardens and terraces in the French style that are perfect for relaxation and meditation, and which offer stunning views over the town, the port of Le Havre and the Seine estuary.

The Natural History Museum ⁵. Originally a court of justice, it was built in 1760 and converted into a museum during the second half of the 19th Century. It is a place of discovery to be shared by all the family, and its frequently-changed exhibitions, which are entertaining and interactive, explore the wealth of the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms.





Le Havre, l'impressionniste

Let us not forget that in **1872, Monet** painted his extraordinary evocation of daybreak over a foggy Le Havre. He called it "**Impression soleil levant**" **1**, or "an Impression of the rising sun", and hence, from that word, Impressionism was born and it was the first modern art work. Although **Boudin** **2**, Monet's teacher, was born in Honfleur, he nonetheless began his career and also developed his talent in Le Havre. The exceptional light at the mouth of the estuary is critical, as **Raoul**

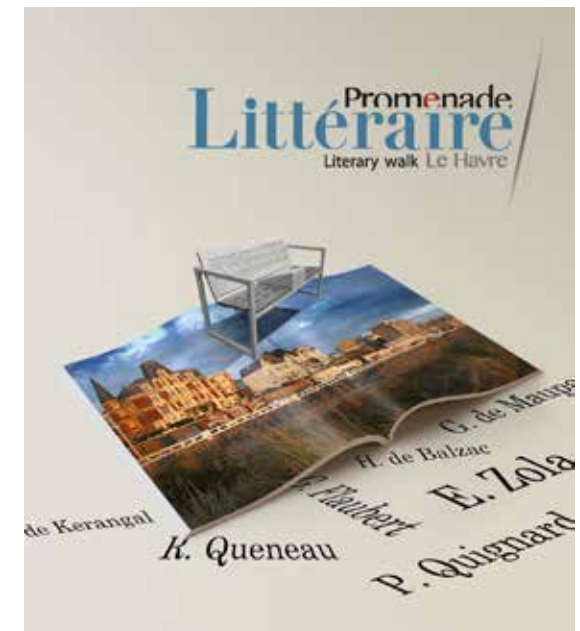
Dufy **3** wrote several years later and the port, beach and regattas of Le Havre have inspired other artists including **Pissarro** **4**, **Sisley** and **Jongkind**.

MuMa (le Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux) which is located close to the spot where Monet set up his easel, now overlooking the marina, has the largest collection (more than 450 works) of impressionist paintings in France outside the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

You can follow in the footsteps of the Impressionists and the Fauves (**Dufy, Marquet, Friesz**) following the trail of information boards dotted around the Bassin du Commerce at the entrance to the port and along past the marinas and beaches to Boulevard Clemenceau and up Boulevard Albert 1^{er} before reaching Sainte-Adresse at the foot of Cap de la Hève.

Le Havre, From Fiction to Film

The town has also provided fertile ground for writers, photographers and film-makers. In the past, it stimulated the imaginations of **Balzac, Maupassant, Henry Miller, Jean-Paul Sartre** and **Raymond Queneau**. Today it inspires authors such as **Maylis de Kérangal, Benoît Duteurtre, Jean-Christophe Rufin, Christophe Ono-dit-Biot** and **Michel Bussi**. And not to forget its influence on cinema; depending on the period, the industrial atmosphere of the port or the style of Le Havre's post-war reconstruction have attracted the lenses of film-makers such as **Renoir, Carné, Decoin, Oury, Beauvois, Belvaux** and **Kaurismäki**.





Le Havre, Green Spaces

Since 2008, the “Hanging Gardens”; the award-winning **Jardins Suspendus** ¹ botanical gardens have been an iconic part of the landscape of Le Havre, offering visitors a sensory experience exploring plant life from around the world. This wonderful 17 hectare (42 acre) site overlooking the Baie de Seine has superb views of the sea, port and town. An unusual example of re-adaptation, this former mid-19th-century military fort has now become a vast garden focusing on plant-hunting sea voyages. Set out as themed gardens, the ramparts now recall North America, East Asia, Australasia and the plants that were (re)discovered there. Down in the centre of the fort and protected by its high walls, there are 5,000 m² of glasshouses where the wonderful flower displays in all the city's parks, winter and summer, are grown.

The exotic theme can be continued with a visit to the **Jardin Japonais** ² (The **Japanese garden**), a surprising and unusual garden that is a calm and peaceful oasis away from the hustle and bustle. It reflects Japan's finest ancestral traditions and celebrates the twinning of the



ports of Le Havre and Osaka. It lies half way between “Les Docks” and the Saint François quarter.

In the town centre, the gardens in **Square Saint Roch** ³ and **Square Erignac** provide a touch of greenery and colour, along with the flowerbeds of the Hôtel de Ville gardens, which are beautifully laid-out by the town's parks and gardens team.

More tucked-away, but no less surprising and interesting, the **Jardin du Silence** ⁴ is a space for meditation, refreshment, reflection and contemplation of the beauty of nature and life away from the hustle and bustle of the port and the town. It is part of a Convent, but all visitors are welcome regardless of their beliefs, to enjoy a moment of calm and inner peace. After enjoying the tranquillity of this place for a while, why not spend a little longer in the shop where you can buy jars of jam made by the Sisters

– a sin for which you will surely be forgiven! It is situated at 151, rue Félix Faure, a short distance from the **Jardins Suspendus**, above.

For those who love the great outdoors, running or cycling, head to the “premier” green lung of the town, the **Forêt de Montgeon** ⁵, Le Havre's answer to **Central Park**, where you will find 270 hectares (650 acres) of space and numerous sports facilities and play areas.

A stone's throw away, meadows, ponds and woods fill the 160 hectares (400 acres) of **Parc de Rouelles** ⁶, providing a stunning backdrop to the **Manoir de la Bouteillerie** and its 17th-century dovecote, a typical example of Pays de Caux architecture. There is a comprehensive permanent exhibition about the flora and fauna of the park, the perennial garden and the arboretum, which has 259 species belonging to 36 plant families.



Le Havre, For Foodies

Le Havre is above all a commercial and cruise-liner port, but there is also a fishing fleet, so why not make the most of the lively fish market [1](#), located opposite the Maison de l'Armateur in the St François Quarter? Around fifteen stalls offer freshly-landed fish.

Les Halles Centrales central market is the essential stop for the best produce, including vegetables, cheese, meat and charcuterie, not to mention freshly roasted coffee (Le Havre has long had a love of coffee and a history in the coffee trade). Every Sunday the market spills outdoors with extra stalls from local producers [2](#).

As a port city at the crossroads of the world, Le Havre offers all manner of cuisines from local "cuisine du terroir" to that from more exotic climes. Jean-Luc Tartarin [3](#), who has two Michelin stars, leads the pack with his use of local produce.



All-year round events in the Communauté Urbaine Le Havre Seine Métropole

Literary festivals

- “Le goût des autres” (second fortnight in January)
- “Polar à la plage” (mid-June)

Festivals

- Un Été au Havre
- The “Vent des Falaises” kite festival (Saint-Jouin-Bruneval, mid-June)
- The Cerfs-Volants kite festival (Bénouville, last weekend in September)
- Festival Béton (music, food, architecture)
- Plantes en Fête flower show (Château d’Orcher, 2nd weekend of October)

Music Festivals

- Les Dixie Days (Pentecost weekend)
- Hello Birds (early July in Etretat)
- MoZ’Aïque, world music festival (3± week of July)
- Offenbach (first fortnight in August, Etretat)
- Ouest Park (4 days in September or October)

Festivals

- Fête du cirque, circus festival, Saint-Romain de Colbosc (3 days in June)
- Fête de la mer, festival of the sea (last weekend in August, Le Havre)
- Fête de la Scie, medieval festival (every two years, Harfleur)
- Nuit du Tourisme de l’Estuaire (last Saturday in September at Le Havre and first Saturday in October at Etretat). Open evening with dramatised tours, music and food in various locations.

Exhibitions

- MuMa (Musée des Beaux Arts André Malraux); major exhibition from April/May to September/October.
- Maison de l’Armateur: (From May to September)
- Abbaye de Graville: (From May to September)
- Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle (exhibition about flora and fauna)
- Le Portique, regional centre for contemporary art
- Le Tétris

Nautical Events

- Le Havre’s leading marina is just two hours from Paris and has moorings for 1500 boats. It has the largest number of qualified sailors of any city in France, and is the premier leisure port on the Channel coast. Many competitions are held here, including:
- The “Jacques Vabre” transatlantic yacht race from Le Havre to Salvador de Bahia (also known as the “Route du Café”) which takes place every two years.
- Les voiles étudiantes, LH AllMer Cup, the Normandie Cup, etc.
- Festival de la Glisse board sports festival (Le Havre beach, end of August)





Un Été au Havre

Street art by internationally renowned artists highlights the unique character of the Porte Océane (June to October). Every season since 2017 (the 500th anniversary of the founding of the city and the port), Jean Blaise, the artistic director, has invited mixed media artists and international creators, to honour Perret's architecture by playing with shapes, volumes and materials. They flex their creative muscles to show off the beauty of the city of Le Havre and its port. Basing itself on the considerable

wealth of this maritime city, its expertise and its talents, the "Un été au Havre" exhibition creates a new rapport with the city via the presence of temporary and permanent modern artistic installations. Over and above this, the location brings together players and residents of the area. Tourists and visitors are invited to stroll through the city on circuits that take them from one work of art to another.





Sainte-Adresse, Montivilliers, Harfleur, Gonfreville

The following four communes are located on the edge of the Le Havre Métropole and are of particular historic interest to visitors.

Praised in the 19th century by Alphonse Karr, then editor of the Figaro newspaper, and then by Georges Dufayel, father of the “**Nice Havrais**” in the 1900s, **Sainte-Adresse** **1** typifies the spirit of a seaside resort. Curiously, it was the administrative capital of Belgium during the First World War, as well as a source of inspiration for the impressionists and a well-known surfing spot. Sainte-Adresse combines elegance, enjoyment, history, culture and watersports in addition to architectural interest from its many splendid villas. Overlooking the estuary, the picturesque sailors’ chapel of Notre Dame des Flots and the striking “Sugarloaf” memorial are definitely worth a visit.

Montivilliers **2** is an essential stop on the Normandy Abbeys trail and is one of the most beautiful and prestigious abbeys in Normandy. Founded in 684 by Saint Philibert, it was destroyed by the Vikings, but reconstructed in the 11th century, when it became a convent and the town grew up around it. It prospered from trade in tanning, weaving and country fairs. The buildings, which are arranged around a cloister, have now been restored and are used for tourism and cultural purposes. The Abbesses’ lodgings are now a library and the “Gothic” refectory is a space for temporary exhibitions. The **Coeur**

d’Abbayes audio guide tour enables everyone to explore the eventful history of the “Abbesses city” in medieval Normandy. A visit would be incomplete without spending some time in the remarkable Abbey church of Saint Saviour, which combines both Romanesque and Gothic architecture. This trip back in time can be continued at the Aître de Brisgaret cemetery, the protestant church and through a pedestrian trail exploring historic local buildings including the hallettes market stalls, the Hôtel-Dieu, and the half-timbered houses and mills.

The rich history of the area can also be seen on the banks of the river Lézarde in **Harfleur** **3**, which was once a medieval fortified town. Today, the commune has a rich heritage of buildings dating from the 14th to 17th centuries, including a former inn that is now the Musée du Prieuré, and the Hôtel de Ville, which is housed in a château.. The crowning glory is the Gothic church of St Martin, known as the lighthouse of the Pays de Caux due to its spire, which has interesting contemporary stained glass windows by Bernard Piffaretti. Harfleur’s pivotal role as a port ended with the silting up of the river Lézarde and the creation of Le Havre by King François I.

Finally, the 12th-century cliff-top castle of **Gonfreville l’Orcher** **4** dominates both the Seine valley and the port of Harfleur. Its park offers unbeatable views over the estuary. Each year in the second weekend of October it hosts the “Plantes en Fêtes” flower show.

The **Maison du Patrimoine et des Cités Provisoires** opened its doors to the public on 8 May 2019. Housed in two restored huts, this museum presents memories of the WW2 “Cigarette Camps” through objects, furniture and documents that bear witness to a piece of history. The display brings back to life the conditions for GIs and civilians at Camp Philip Morris. After housing US soldiers waiting to return home, the camp became a temporary home to local people who had been bombed out of their houses during the air raids.





Etretat, Saint-Jouin-Bruneval

"If I had to show a friend the sea for the first time, I would choose Etretat" wrote Alphonse Karr, novelist and journalist for Le Figaro, and with his comment the reputation of this exceptional natural spot was officially launched. Still "wild" and difficult to access in the first third of the 19th century, it was a source of inspiration for the painter **Eugène Isabey**. His success and the beauty of the location then attracted the very best painters from France and abroad, including **Courbet**, **Boudin**, **Monet**, **Vallotton**, **Matisse** and many others. Etretat's reputation and rise in popularity were really established with the Second Empire and by the end of the 19th century Etretat had won its reputation as an outstanding tourist destination. Famous names such as **Jérôme Bonaparte**, **Jules Michelet** and **Félix Faure** would stay there for a few days or weeks and others, including the composer **Jacques Offenbach** had seaside villas built here. Writers also greatly contributed to Etretat's booming reputation. Its proximity to Le Havre and Rouen, along with a new railway line that opened the town up to the world, meant that from the end of the 19th century it was often visited by Parisian high society and the international aristocracy.

It is a place of outstanding natural beauty **1** with a series of arches known as the **Manneporte**, the **Falaise d'Aval** (the cliffs on the left seen from the beach) and the **Falaise d'Amont** (to the right). These natural chalk sculptures formed by selective erosion by the sea that have been made world-famous by various painters and writers. At the top of the Falaise d'Amont, which is

accessible on foot, there is a sailors' chapel **2** dedicated to the Virgin Mary, **Notre-Dame de la Garde**, along with a charming heritage museum and a monument in the form of a white arrow in homage to the aviators **Charles Nungesser and François Coli** **3** who set off in 1927 to attempt a transatlantic crossing to the United States in their plane **L'Oiseau blanc**, which was last seen crossing the cliffs of Etretat, but which was never seen again.

Opposite, the **Falaise d'Aval** is just as impressive as its neighbour **4**. Its attractions include the **Aiguille** chalk needle protruding from the sea, which was immortalised by **Maurice Leblanc** in his **Arsène Lupin** novels, and the **Golf course** **5**, which is one of the most beautiful and unusual in France. At the foot of the cliff there are traces of oyster beds and the Trou à l'Homme cave. If you walk further on from this cliff you will see the third cliff, the Manneporte.

Framed by the two white chalk walls, the famous shingle beach is a favourite haunt of surfers and paddle-boarders. The town has a rich architectural heritage and there are numerous villas including **Clos Lupin** (home of **Maurice Leblanc** **6**) and La **Guillette** **7** (home of novelist **Guy de Maupassant**), the old market, **Le Château des Aygues**, a seaside residence built in 1866 at the time of the Second Empire, and the **Church of Notre Dame**, a perfect synthesis of Romanesque and Gothic styles.

Don't leave without seeing the gardens, the **Jardins d'Etretat**, a truly magical place. The Russian landscaper

Alexandre Grivko has planted 10,000 trees and shrubs including box, yew, rhododendron and orchids brought from nurseries in Germany and Belgium and has combined them with works by contemporary sculptors.

A few miles away, in **Saint-Jouin-Bruneval** **8**, you can explore the open-air museum at La Valleuse, the location of Operation Biting during the Second World War. In summer, you can enjoy or try out activities including paddleboarding, kayaking or surfing at the Base Nautique **9**.





Le Havre-Seine-Métropole

A family-friendly destination

Thanks to various family-friendly facilities and services offered by hotels, restaurants, leisure activities and other establishments, **Le Havre Seine Métropole** has become a favourite destination for families and has a wide range of activities exploring the town, coast and countryside.



Nature and walks

With more than 25 suggested walks throughout the area there is plenty for both occasional and experienced walkers to choose from. Circular walks ranging from four to fifteen miles offer walkers the opportunity to explore the contrasting landscapes of the Pointe de Caux.



Unusual Encounters

During the summer season, Le Havre Etretat Normandie Tourisme offers various unusual encounters, such as the opportunity to explore behind the scenes at a local business, the airport, the tramway maintenance depot, a recycling centre, the Pont de Normandie or a football stadium where the stands transform into hotel rooms! Or for a more naturalistic experience, you could learn how cheese is made at a creamery, what a coffee roaster does, how organic vegetables or scented flowers are grown, or go for a walk at dusk with a naturalist as guide..

Practical Information

- Two hours from Paris by train (regular service) or road (A13)
- Airport: Le Havre-Octeville
- Daily ferry service to and from England (Le Havre – Portsmouth; Brittany Ferries)



A stopover port

For decades, Le Havre was the transatlantic port where the most majestic steamers set off from Porte Océane harbour for the New World. La Cie Générale Transatlantique was the emblem of this activity at the time, as well as the byword in French naval construction and luxury. The development of air travel marked the closing chapter of this story in the mid-70s, with the decommissioning of the liner “La France”, the last representative of this bygone era.

But following a period where profits were meagre, the cruise industry is now returning to its former glory and

since 2007 has recorded an average annual growth of 14%. Cruise ships are no longer a means of transport but instead are tourism experiences taking passengers around Northern Europe, the British Isles, Spain, Portugal and further. Le Havre has thus become a stopover port (135 in 2019, representing over 350,000 passengers) and a port of embarkation once more.

This shift can be explained by the implementation of a strategy that first created one brand, “**Le Havre, the gateway to Paris**”, then a second one, “**Le Havre: cruise**

destination” created infrastructures, undertook lobbying within networks, founded a Cruise Club with institutional and private partner members and had representatives attend major international events. Plus, of course, a tireless tourism industry that was considerably boosted by Le Havre’s listing as a **World Heritage Site**. This growth in maritime traffic has since 2016 been accompanied by an increase in trips further up the Seine (122 stopovers in 2019), requiring conversion work on the “quai de Marseille”.

A business destination

The new area around the Docks is a symbol of the regeneration and modernity of Le Havre. It is an inviting and unique location that combines modern, high-quality urban features around the harbour basins with interesting historical elements from its past as a port. The Centre des Congrès (which can host up to 2000 people) is a modern architectural icon with an ‘urban harbour’ flair, and its exhibition park, a flagship of the location devoted to conferences and seminars, now establish Le Havre as a business destination in its own right.





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