



★ **Start in front of the tourist information office.** You are in the Place de la Marie (Town Hall Square). From 1890 to 1972, the Town Hall was a girls' school. In 1972 the schools in the town were merged under the current school group name of 'Mick Michey'.

1 Cross the Place du Marche (Market Square) towards the River Saone. A market is held here every Thursday and Sunday morning in winter.

2 You are now on the quayside, where the Montmerlois (the people of Montmerle) like to stroll along in the shade of the plane trees, which were planted in 1845. There is a market here every Sunday morning from April to September. Go to the right and continue along the quayside for about 100 metres.

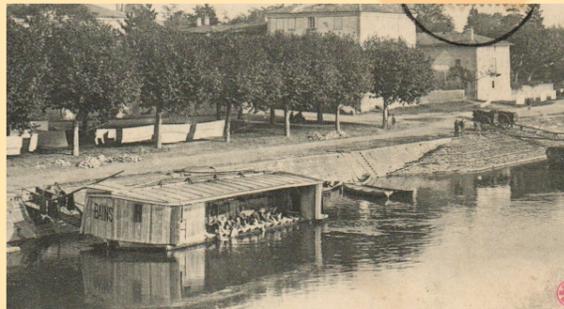
3 Number 1 South Quay: the house on your right has an enclosed courtyard with access to the river. It was once a landing stage for the horses pulling barges along the towpath alongside the river. Behind this house, on the Rue du Port, was a hotel which welcomed travellers arriving by boat.



4 At number 7 Rue du Port, there is a stone plaque marking the level reached by the River Saone in 1840 during one of the worst floods ever known. After this disastrous event, 'flood doors' were built in houses on the banks of the river, giving an escape route to people in these terraced properties at times of flooding. These flood doors and markers are a reminder of the sometimes dangerous proximity of the River Saone.

5 Nique Bedin House: Number 12 Rue du Port has a stone on its gates engraved with the letters 'NB' This stone marked the marriage of Doctor Francois Nique and Miss Bedin in 1894. This large bourgeois house was originally a farm, to which a directoire-style wing added in 1830.

6 On the quayside at the end of the Rue du Port, there is a laundry-boat once used by washerwomen and abandoned in 1922.



The Rue du Port takes its name from its direct access to the port on the Saone. This harbour was considered an important transit point, in particular because the famous boat 'Le Parisien' stopped there until the 1930s. Le Parisien sailed between Lyon and Chalon-sur-Saone, carrying goods in its hold and 50 to 80 passengers on its decks. The round trip took two days.



To reach the Rue du Port, do not follow the quayside but the street just next to it.

7 Rue du Port: How can you miss the Montmerle Bridge that takes you to St George-de-Reneins? Before 1835, people crossed the river Saone by ferry. The first bridge was made of wood and was a toll bridge. The current bridge, made of aluminium alloy, was built in 1973 and was the first of its kind in France. One of its piles has three flood-level markers: 1799, 1955 and 1956.



8 At number 12 Rue du Port, the present hotel-restaurant Emile Job was once a highly popular dance hall called 'Vauxhall', complete with its own orchestra.

9 At the corner of Rue du Port and Rue de Macon is a marker showing flood levels in 1840.

10 At number 25 Rue de Macon, look up and take a few steps back. A polychrome virgin and child are looking at you from the shelter of their niche in the wall.



17 Once you are on the Rue des Minimes, take the stone path that goes up to the chapel. After 100 metres, keep to the left and walk between the two boundary stones. These stones were once called phallic stones and were thought to be petrified human beings that could help to remedy sterility.

18 From the square you can admire the river Saone that flows through the valley. When it floods, it covers the surrounding fields, producing a rich natural fertiliser. It also provides a navigation channel which used to make the Saone valley vulnerable to attack. This is the reason that farms around here are fortified.

19 The Chapel and the Chateau des Minimes: a feudal castle once stood on the Minimes site. It was the monastery and home of the Reverend Minimes fathers. The castle was destroyed in 1793. The Chapel des Minimes became famous thanks to Saint Cure d' Ars who particularly loved the place.



20 The Minimes Tower: built in 1843 by a M. Voisin. It was restored in 2002 and is now owned by the town. It is around 20 metres high. The Parc des Minimes was created by Treyves, who designed the famous gardens in Vichy.

21 The vineyard of Minimes Tower: during the 19th century there were many wine-growers in Montmerle who cultivated the vines in summer and were chair-makers in winter. Most of the vineyards disappeared between 1955 and 1956. Today, the Minimes vineyards are the last sign of this lost tradition, but it is revived in September each year during European Heritage Days - a celebratory grape harvest event organised by the Brotherhood of Minimes knights (La confrerie des chevaliers des Minimes).

22 At number 23 Rue des Minimes you can still make out some old advertising on the wall.



23 At number 24 Rue des Minimes you will be passing the entrance to the Chateau de la Zeille. Built in 1810, its former owner, Jean-Pierre Higorique, was a theatre entrepreneur in Bordeaux and Lyon. Later it became the property of M. Farfouillon, an architect in Lyon.

24 At number 17 Rue des Minimes, look out for the lovely little stone figure of the Virgin Mary.

25 At number 14 Rue des Minimes, you will find a well which takes its name - puits a bonnet- (bonnet-well) from its shape. The pump was built in 1843 and has a triangular section on top. In fact, wells supplied many houses until 1957. The water in the wells came either from the water table or from rainwater. The wells were strictly regulated to ensure good relations between neighbours.

26 Church Saint-Nicholas: Built in 1835 in a neo-classic style, the church was commissioned by Priest Guyoux, Vicar of Montmerle. He was the inventor of the equatorial sundial. There remain about a dozen of these sundials, particularly one in the Trappist Abbey des Dombes in Plantay.



27 At number 13 Rue de Lyon you can see a wrought iron fanlight from 1780, representing a craftsman's tools (an axe, a compass, a set square). It might be proof that this place was a stopping-point on the Trade Guilds' tour around France. (Tour de France de Compagnonnage).

28 At number 18 Rue de Lyon: go through an entrance on your right. You are now in the Passage des Mariniers (The mariners' alley) another reminder of the importance of the river Saone to the town. This alley is named after those who navigated the river in barges carrying goods or equipment and who stopped in Montmerle.

29 You are now back on the quayside. This area was a source of inspiration for another famous character of Montmerle, the commander Jean-Baptiste Tournassoud (1866 - 1951), grandfather of Mick Michey. Along with the Lumiere Brothers, he was one of the first autochrome photographers. He is famous for his military images but he also took many photographs of the region.

Follow the quayside to the Chemin de la Rivière just behind the mini golf park. Take it and you will reach Rue de Lyon.

30 The Castel de Valrose: this amazing house in Rue de Lyon was built in 1925, between the two World Wars and at the beginning of the Art Deco movement. A fashionable architect of the period was commissioned to design the house by a M. Serre, an industrialist from Lyon, who had decided to build a second home in Montmerle-sur-Saone, already well-known for its peacefulness and good quality of life. To finish your tour, a passage situated between the number 84 and number 86 in rue de Lyon will take you to the docks.



**We hope you have enjoyed your tour of the town. Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information.**

# Information



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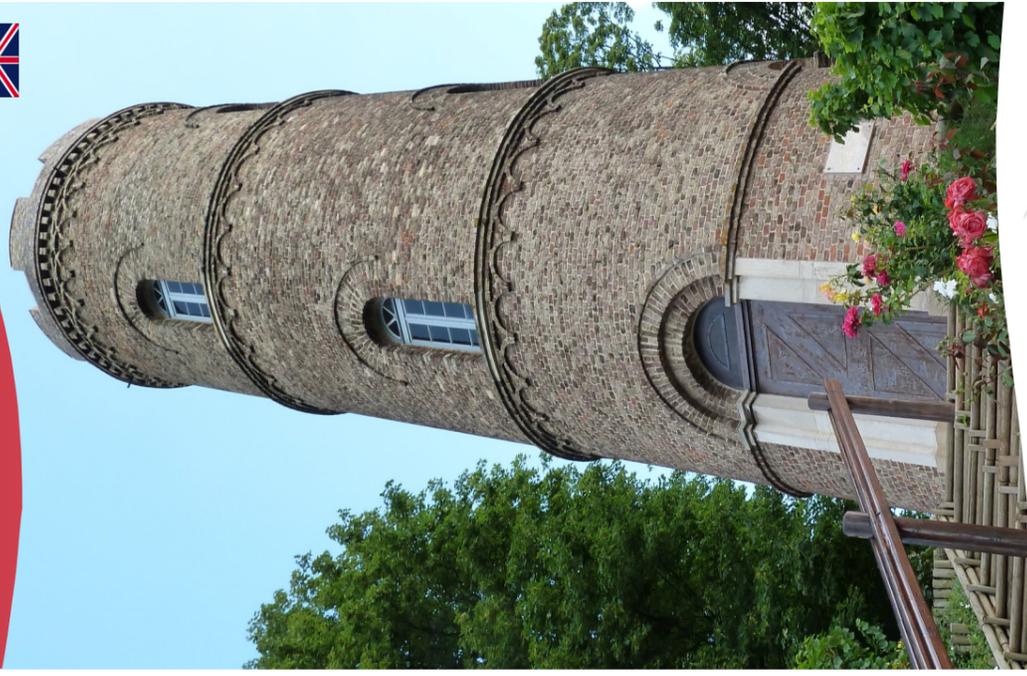
**Website :** www.tourisme-val-de-saone.fr

**You are welcomed to visit us from Tuesday to Saturday  
From 9 am to 12:30 am and from 1:30 pm - 5 pm  
And Sunday from 9 am to 1.00 pm  
(mid-June to mid-September)**

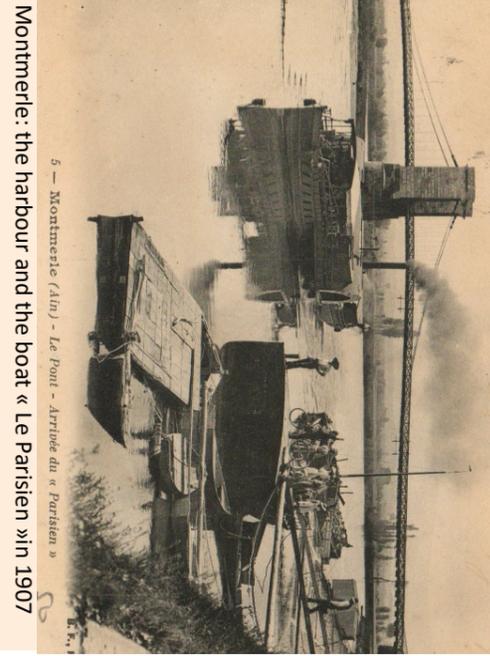


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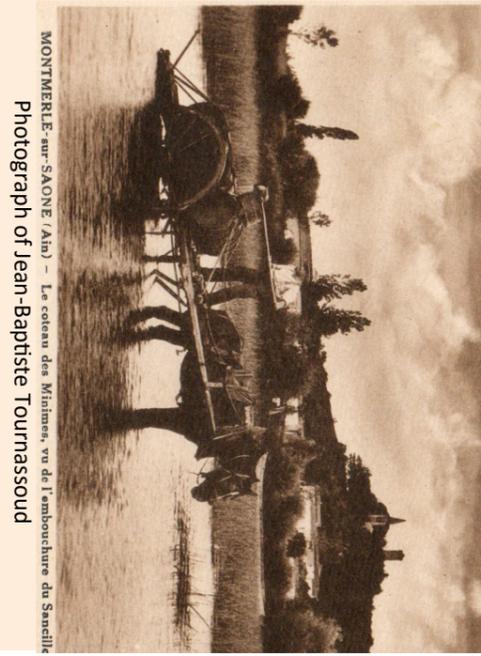
# MONTMERLE-SUR-SAÔNE A Town Trail



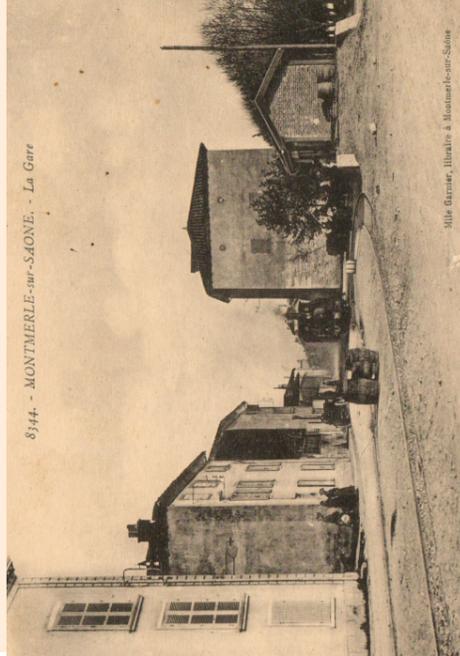
Upholsterers in Montmerle



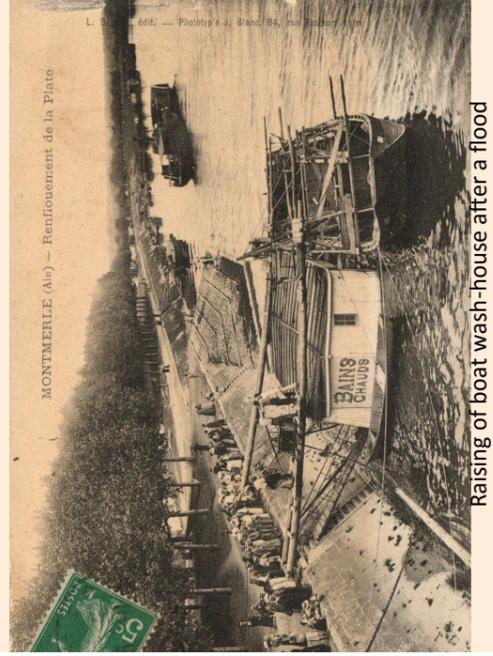
Montmerle: the harbour and the boat « Le Parisien » in 1907



MONTMERLE-sur-SAÔNE (Ain) - Le bateau des Minimes, vu de l'embarcadere du Saneille  
Photograph of Jean-Baptiste Tournassoud



Train Station in 1927



Raising of boat wash-house after a flood

Have you noticed the steel sculpture representing the 'Blackbird of Montmerle' as you come in to the town? It was created by Mick Micheyl and is evidence of the artist's attachment to her community. Follow this theme and you will discover the people and the characters, famous or not, who have made their mark on Montmerle.



## People and characters

Certain stones have heard people's prayers, others tell us about a person's work, yet more recount traditions. What are they, these witnesses to Montmerle's history? Is it the statue of the Virgin Mary, snuggled up in her niche, or the chapel dominating the town? Is it the name of a street, or the railway, a reminder of a bygone way of life? Keep your eyes open while you walk because they are watching us, hidden in the stone walls, inscribed on plaques, or buried in the tarmac, objects so ordinary that we don't notice them anymore.

## What the stones have to tell us!

Have a look for this precious resource around the town centre. Sharpen your divining stick: we are on the look-out for signs of water

## The water and the city

## The history of the town: 1 tour, 3 themes

The origins of Montmerle are uncertain: some archaeological pieces have been found which bear witness to Roman occupation and are held in the Gallo-Roman Museum in Lyon.



The town was first documented in 1039 when it became the property of the monks of Cluny. Guichard l'Enchaîne, one of the principal lords of Montmerle, owned the city until his death in 1101. It then passed to the Lords of Beaujeu who used the Castle of Minimes to control the Val de Saone.

In 1400, the Bourbons became masters of the town and held it until the French Revolution in 1789. During this period, Montmerle grew extensively. One particular industry became established: chair-making, which continued until the 1930s before disappearing.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the people of Montmerle made their living from vine-growing, silkworm breeding, chair-making and agriculture. The proximity of the river Saone also gave rise to jobs in navigation and fishing.



The story of the town can be seen in its buildings and in its continuing sense of heritage, its preservation of various periods of its history.

The aim of this town trail is to reveal its heritage through three main themes, showing a town that is modern and yet intimately linked to its past.