

CONNECTION

This English Section appears bi-weekly Edited by : Wendy Y.C. Yeh

Profile

Going Beyond the Ordinary: Rouen, France (5)



Rouen is a city on the River Seine in the north of France. It is the capital of the region of Normandy. It used to be one of the most prosperous cities of medieval Europe.

The population of the metropolitan area at the 2007 census was more than 532,000. People from Rouen are known as Rouennais.

Rouen was founded by the Gaulish tribe of Vellocasses, who controlled large area in the lower Seine Valley. After the first Viking incursion into the lower valley in 841, they went on to overrun Rouen. Some of them settled and founded a colony led by Rollo, who was nominated to be Count of Rouen by King Charles in 911. In the 10th century, Rouen became the capital of the Duchy of Normandy.

In 1150, Rouen received its founding charter, which permitted self-government.

During the Hundred Years' War, in 1419, Rouen and its population of 70,000 surrendered to Henry V of England.

The British used Rouen as a supply base during World War I. At that time, there were many military hospitals in the city. Rouen was heavily damaged during World War II. Approximately 45% of the city was destroyed.

Palais de Justice and Monument Juif is a splendid example of medieval civilian architecture. It houses the Rouen Law Courts. This Gothic masterpiece was built in 1508. It was partially damaged during World War II during an Allied bombing. With determination of the Rouen residents, the building was subsequently restored successfully. Unfortunately, the exquisite façade of the Palais de Justice still has

evidence of shell holes from Allied bombings. Some of the shell holes are still visible in the building's walls today. I got sentimental when witnessing its destruction suffered during the Second World War.

The building is not open for tours. But for a visitor like me, I was awed by just admiring the incredible architecture and the ornate detailing of the façade, especially those soar pinnacles around the central wing.

In the center of the Place du Vieux Marche (the site of the pyre of Jean d'Arc) is the bright church of Saint Jean d'Arc. This is a large, modern structure which dominates the square. The form of the building represents an upturned Viking boat and a shape of the fish.

The idyllic town of Rouen provided enduring grace notes to me. I wanted to learn from the

people I met in Rouen. They seemed to be able to throw the powerful light of the long, long past into the light of the morning. As our tour bus sped down the freeway, I glimpsed a fringe of fresh flowers waving under the glistening sky. When I thought of my Rouen trip, I smiled in delight for having had the experience to go beyond the ordinary.

Whenever someone asks me where is my favorite place to visit? My answer is always the same. I would say, "Every place I have visited is my favorite place."

But Rouen will always hold a cherished place in my heart.



▲enjoyed dining in this beautiful restaurant in the countryside of Rouen, France



▲the exquisite Cathedrale Notre-Dame de Rouen took 300 years to complete



▲admiring the medieval architecture when strolling through the cobblestoned streets of Rouen in France



▲browsing in a modern gift shop near the historical burnt site of Jean d'Arc in Rouen, France

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