



From history to modernity



PICTOGRAMS

- Children's sports ground
- Telephone
- Restroom
- Beverages
- Public Transportation (TPG)
- Mouettes Genevoises passenger ferry
- Sports, sports centre
- Pet zoo, aviary
- Shopping centre
- Allotted gardens
- Museum
- Culture (movie, theater, lending library...)
- Market
- Information (Municipal Information point)
- Car park
- Steps
- From 1 to 36, suggested itinerary for this walk
- Alternative route
- Boat route (mouettes)



The Horticultural school, Franchises park in 1926



The Charmilles district

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- Municipal information point www.ville-ge.ch
1, pont de la Machine, phone +41 (0)22 311 99 70
- "Plan Piétons" www.ville-ge.ch/plan-pietons
- Public transportation (TPG) www.tpg.ch
Mobility information phone +41 (0)22 308 34 34
- Taxi phone +41 (0)22 331 41 33
- Weather report phone 162

WARNING

- Estimated walking time 3 hours
- This guided walking tour, the 8th Pedestrian Plan walk, "From history to modernity", follows major traffic roads such as the Aire Avenue and the roads to Meyrin or Ferney. It is designed for a public with knowledge of urbanization and architecture. It will enable you, should your curiosity be aroused, to discover the traces of Geneva's rich historic past that lie hidden in the "highways" of yore.

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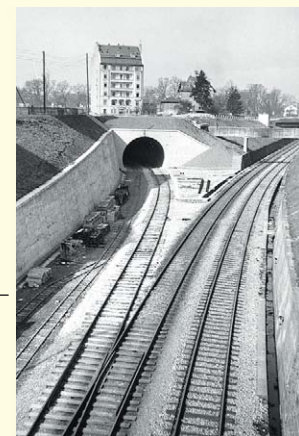
Carlton Hotel, future ICRC, May 1928



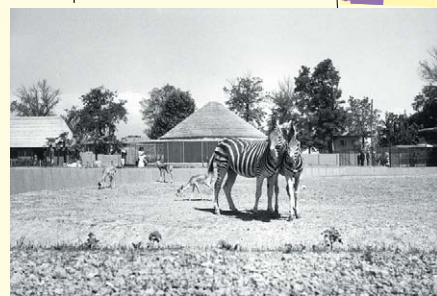
Peace avenue around 1940



The Crêts promenade



Saint-Jean tunnel
Seen from the Delights bridge



Aire avenue - Zoo in 1941



FROM HISTORY TO MODERNITY

Moving out of the historic heart of the City of Geneva, this route winds its way through districts on the right bank created by the urban expansion of Geneva.

A hundred years ago Saint-Jean, Chatelaine, Budé or Varembe were essentially rural areas. Throughout the 20th century these districts rapidly became urbanized along the ancestral communication routes that lead to the lake. These "highways" of yore, now heavy with traffic, hem in neighbourhoods known only to those who live or work there. Visitors to the city beside the lake merely cross these main roads unaware of the riches they enclose.

On this walk strollers can discover some aspects of the transformation of the old commune of Petit-Saconnex that became part of the City of Geneva in 1930. All along this route mansions and farms, vestiges of former large estates, adjoin modern residential complexes. "Bourgeois" districts arise next to workers' housing estates and the monuments of international architecture.

Thus the eighth Pedestrian Plan walk, called "From history to modernity", leads you from the local to the international. Starting at the very Genevan district of Saint-Jean, it leads you into the heart of international Geneva, illustrating a remarkable trait of urban development: the coexistence of the ancient and the modern.

So, along your way, it will be up to you to feel the subtle influences the past has had on the present

TO LEARN MORE...

- Bischofberger Yves and Anita Frei (1998), Guide des chemins historiques du canton de Genève, Direction du patrimoine et des sites, DAEL, Genève, Slatkine
- Brulhart Armand et Erica Deuber-Pauli (1993), Ville et canton de Genève, Arts et monuments, Berne, Benteli, 2e édition
- Charollais Isabelle, Lamunière Jean-Marc et Michel Nemec (1999), L'architecture à Genève 1919-1975, Direction du patrimoine et des sites, DAEL, Genève, Payot
- Corboz André, Gubler Jacques et Jean-Marc Lamunière (1969), Guide d'architecture moderne de Genève, Lausanne, Payot
- Inventaire suisse d'architecture INSA (1982), vol. 4: Genève, Société d'histoire de l'art en Suisse, Berne
- Massaglia Marina, Maurice Brillard, architecte et urbaniste (1991), Fondation Brillard Architectes, Georg Editeur
- Répertoire des immeubles et objets classés (1994), DAEL, Georg Editeur

THE PEDESTRIAN PLAN COLLECTION

This itinerary is part of the Pedestrian Plan collection of walks conceived by the Planning Office of the City of Geneva.

- Walking in Geneva
- From estate to estate
Geneva - Bois-de-la-Bâtie - Jardin Botanique
- From site to museum
Geneva on foot - in the heart of its heritage
- From quay to runway
Geneva on foot - between travel and nature
- From city to city
Geneva on foot - from the lake to the Arve
- Walking Downstream
Geneva on foot - nature and technology
- From here and afar
Geneva on foot - between work and leisure
- From body to heart
Geneva on foot - health and urban planning

IMPRESSUM

- Concept
Texts
Translation
Photos
- City of Geneva
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Centre d'iconographie genevoise (CIG)
Gilles Calza
Caux d'en face, Geneva
Imprimerie Genevoise S.A., Geneva
50'000 copies / june 2003

0 100 200 400 600 800 m



1 THE DÉLICES BRIDGE

8 m1 (Delights Bridge)

The railway line opened in 1848 divides properties that formerly stretched from the Rhône cliffs to Lyon Road. The Délices Bridge, which marks the beginning of the Saint-Jean and Charmilles districts, spans the railway cuttings. Now that the railway lines have been covered over, it marks the entrance of a tunnel. In fact, this construction no longer resembles a bridge, but has become a complex crossroads with heavy traffic, where cars, buses, cyclists and numerous pedestrians meet.



2 THE COVERING OF THE SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS (CFF)

The extension of the railway line to the airport has increased a hundredfold the number of passing trains between Saint-Jean and the Charmilles district. Because of the increase in noise, the City and the Swiss State Railways decided to cover over the railway lines. In 1992 a competition was organized. Architects P. Bonnet, P. Bosson and A. Vaucher won the project. First the cover was put in place, then a number of buildings were erected on it : a community center, a medico-social center, a municipal library and workshops for artisans. The public area is laid out as an urban park. Access to it is by ramps and footbridges, which endeavours to link two well-established districts.

The last section of the line on the Jura side is both close to nature and an educational and play area. The clump of vegetation laid out, as they are, haphazardly on the edge of the railway covering, remind one of the vegetation on the embankments of railway lines. The central area, with its gravely soil surface, has been taken over by grassy vegetation, "a garden in motion."



3 3-5 MILÉANT ROAD

Admirably situated on the hill in Saint-Jean with an uninterrupted view over the city and the Alps, the block of flats built between 1933 and 1935 by the architect Ch. Vetterli, is much like a boat, with its white façades and rounded balconies. It is a symbol of the modern architectural style typical of this entire district.



4 THE SAINT-JEAN DISTRICT

The Saint-Jean Road, running parallel to the railway line, was built in the second half of the 19th century. The lower part of the district, previously the St-Jean-la-Tour estate, (Saint-Jean-of-the-Tower) established by the Pictet family between 1756 and 1757, was acquired and divided up in 1902 by the architect and promoter Ch. Bizot. In 1898 the Société immobilière genevoise bought up the entire Gallatin property that occupies the upper part of Saint-Jean all the way to Aire Avenue.

The Saint-Jean Protestant Church, built in 1933 by J.L. Cayla and H. Gampert, stands out with its immense triumphal portico, hiding the body of the edifice, which is covered in grey Genevan roughcast widely used in the 1920th-1930th. The Saint-Jean school, inaugurated in 1915, is the result of an architectural design competition held in 1912. Out of 19 projects, the architects A. Olivet and A. Camoletti won the 1st prize. A roof evoking the "national" style crowns the general layout, typical of the "barracks" style of school buildings.



5 SAINT-JACQUES ROUNDABOUT

Between 1898 and 1912, the Société immobilière genevoise established an overall plan of the upper part of Saint-Jean, dedicating the Jean-Jacques roundabout and all the roads stemming off it to Rousseau, whose 200th anniversary was celebrated in 1912. The only exception is the De-Gallatin Avenue, named after the former Gallatin estate that follows the line of the access road.



6 1-3 DE-GALLATIN AVENUE

This is probably the first housing estate in Geneva made of reinforced concrete. It was built by the architect M. Brillaud between 1911 and 1913. Note the round grey stone balloons that crown the entrances and the decorated tympanums above the front doors, that are similar in style to that of art nouveau. The future State Counsellor of the Nicole government, M. Brillaud, lived at No. 3 with his family from 1914, and then Leon Nicole, the future Secretary-General of the Socialist party and Head of the 1933-1935 "red government" of Geneva, set up home there in 1917.



7 AIRE AVENUE

The Châtelaïne plain, common pasture lands in the Middle Ages, was planted in the 17th century with avenues of trees. In 1678 it was reduced to a triangle bordered by the present Châtelaïne Avenue and the Aire Road, a long straight road with a horse-riding path marking the borders of the large estates that stretch down to the Rhône. Before the invasion of the car, summer picnickers and people who came to gather linden blossoms, as well as a private zoo, came here. In autumn a circus sets up at the Charmilles Square.



8 THE ECOLE DE L'EUROPE (The Europe Square School)

The school, inaugurated in September 1997, was designed by J.-M. Bondallaz. It consists of four 3 or 4 story pavilions with small recreation areas for children. A two-way covered footbridge links the pavilions. The charming simple and light architecture of the school contrasts with the massive surrounding apartment blocks. Its 16 classrooms, music room, games room, gym, premises for extra-curricular activities and book-workshop, bring welcome life to this district.



9 THE CHARMILLES DISTRICT

All along the Lyon Road, the Charmilles district accommodates the cream of Geneva industry : Hispano-Suiza, the Geneva Society for Physics Instruments, Tavano, and the Charmilles workshops (Ateliers de Charmilles). Industrial activity here today is considerably reduced. In the 1990^a vast urbanization project accompanied by financial speculation, turned the grounds of the Charmilles Workshops into a densely populated residential area with a commercial center.

The Tavano SA and Hispano-Suiza administrative buildings are all that is left of the industrial era. Tavano SA, founded in Geneva in 1934 and specialising in precision mechanics, gained an international reputation, thanks to the launching of the first portable sewing machines in 1940. The administrative building, created in 1956 by the architect G. Addor, rises 5 meters above the ground, supported by a thick stone slab, standing on 16 unsurfaced exposed concrete columns. The non-load-bearing pre-fabricated façades are made of glass panes. Hispano-Suiza, founded in Barcelona in 1904 and situated in the Lyon Road, rapidly acquired a world-wide reputation with its car and aeroplane engines. In 1939 the company moved to Geneva and installed an armament factory on this vast plot.



10 CHÂTELAÏNE AVENUE / FRANCHISES ROAD

As the extension of Lyon Road, Châtelaïne Avenue was previously a major, well-frequented route used by travelers and merchants going from Geneva to Lyon via Verney and Peney. Branching off it, Franchises Road is likewise a very old route. Until 1924 it was even one of the main access routes to the city, being a section of the French road to Lyon, before the road between Servette and Bouchet was built, providing a more direct route.



11 FRANCHISES PARK

In 1887, E. Vaucher, the owner of the estate situated between the Châtelaïne Avenue and Franchises Road, founded the Horticultural School for the Suisse Romande. It was bought up by the State in 1900. After the school moved to Lullier in 1973, its garden was converted into a five-hectare public park. The arboretum created in 1927 contains a large number of American conifers. The terraces of the Rose Garden inaugurated in 1946 contain several thousand varieties.



12 THE "COIN DE TERRE" (Patch of land)

The residential complex of Bouchet, built between 1934 and 1935 by the Coin-de-Terre Association, is a fine example of an ideal very common between the two world wars : the town house in a city-garden,

The Bouchet complex, founded in 1932, aims at facilitating the acquisition of plots of land to build dwellings on. The Bouchet plot was subdivided into around thirty 200 m2 gardens and eighteen 600 -1000 m2 building plots. The fourteen family town houses designed by the architect A. Hoschel are identical in size and shape, but vary in their internal layout.



13 THE MEYRIN ROAD

In the middle of the 18th century France decided to have a modern road built in the area around Gex to provide a better route for the traffic between Switzerland and Lyon. Two straight sections, converging from Bellegarde and Gex towards Saint-Genis, were extended in the direction of Geneva. This last stretch was inaugurated in 1760, but the section between Servette and Bouchet was built only in 1924, thus creating an important continuous route, which has undergone continuous modernization in the course of 20th century.



14 THE BOUCHET CROSSROADS

During the Reformation the citizens of Geneva and their Bernese allies fought the Savoyard troops, backed by the Spanish on the Bouchet site. In 1760, the great royal route built by King Louis XV of France ended here, where the Genevan and French territories met. The "Geneva road to Mategnin", which gained considerable importance after the construction of the airport at Cointrin at the beginning of the 1920^a, also starts off exactly at this crossroads. Today the Bouchet is one of the most important crossroads of Geneva, and sees a considerable amount of transit traffic, detrimental to the comfort of the local inhabitants and to the quality of the public areas



15 THE MERVELET DISTRICT

In 1912 a competition was opened to generate ideas for the planning of a garden-city on the Mervelet Plateau, west of Bouchet Avenue. Unfortunately, when construction started, the general design proposed by the winning architects A. Guyonnet and J. Torcapel was forgotten. All that was left now was the layout of the Mervelet Avenue, but the plan of a central square with a school and church, was not implemented.



16 THE BOUCHET ESTATE

The Bouchet estate which was established by the Buisson family at the end of the 17th century, contains one of the most beautiful mansions of the Genevan countryside. Its dignified façade, with its gallery of double columns, flanked at the corners by pavilions with pediments, faces the garden.

Below it is Rousseau College, which was built between 1965 and 1970 by the architect A. Ritter.



17 THE CRÊTS PROMENADE

The Crêts promenade crosses the former Petits-Crêts estate, which was converted into a residential estate by Jacob Schweppe, the inventor of the well-known fizzy soft drink. It was formerly the suburban path to Petit-Saconnex. What is now the Crêts Road was built in about 1910. The old route then became a walking path for the residents of the Retirement Home that was founded in 1856.

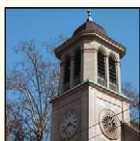
Contact point with the walk : From quay to quay



18 LA TOURELLE

This complex was built on a 5-hectare plot between 1964 and 1970. The architects G. Berthoud, G. Brera, O. and C. Rufer and P. Waltenstühl designed an open park surrounded by four apartment blocks facing the street.

The empty spaces at the angles of the buildings lighten the density of the prefabricated concrete blocks of flats.



19 PETIT-SACCONNEX SQUARE

The historic village of Petit-Saconnex is formed by three former farmhouses that nestle tightly around the square at the intersection of the Grand-Saconnex Road and the road in from the suburb of Aire.

The former farmhouse next to the Protestant Church was demolished and replaced in 1949-1950 by low buildings, back from the road in order to make more space. All that is left of the original nucleus is the Protestant Church dating from 1727-1730 to which the belltower-hall was added in 1844.



20 MOÏSE-DUBOULE ROAD

Linking Petit-Saconnex to Geneva, this path was previously used by the local Protestants who, until around 1620 and the construction of the first Protestant Church, had to go in to town to attend a service. This very old path continues on to Grand-Saconnex.



21 THE BUDÉ PRIMARY SCHOOL

It is one of the most interesting schools created in Geneva, and is the work of the architects G. Addor and J. Bolliger. A single linear building houses the 16 classrooms and its open-plan ground floor provides a covered playground. Its two stories above the ground floor correspond to the dimensions of the Budé farm buildings. It was built at the beginning of the 1960^a, and in 2000 the school needed a considerable amount of restoration. The addition of a shade screen made the whole building more habitable, but considerably altered the original façades.



22 THE BUDÉ ESTATE

The Budé estate, established towards 1710, is an example of "the prestigious country estate." It consists of a vast family mansion set in a park with magnificent tree-lined walks and lovely outbuildings, around a courtyard paved with cobblestones and a monumental fountain. The Budé farm is a working farm, with cultivated grounds nearby. Its produce is sold at the market held there regularly. The estate was sold to the State of Geneva in 1952. In 1957 plans were made for the construction of a hotel, a school and block of flats. The remaining of the estate was listed in 1960. The mansion, restored and transformed in 1965, houses the Inter-Parliamentary Union.



23 THE BUDÉ HOUSING PROJECT

Construction began in 1958, based on the plans of a group architects : G. Addor, D. Julliard, Honegger Bros. and L. Payot. Part of the property was donated to the commune, and on its perimeter a densely populated residential area was created. The blocks of flats were sited in such a way that the mansion and its outbuildings, as well as most of the park, have been preserved. The housing complex, with its proximity to the international organizations, was designed for a mostly wealthy population. It is equipped with roof gardens and a private swimming pool.



24 THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

At the time of its construction at the beginning of the 1960^a, this 400-room hotel was the biggest in Switzerland. Its 18 stories overlook the Lake and the international organization district. The hotel facilities : meeting rooms and multi-purpose facilities with translation purposes, reflect the role it means to play in the international life of Geneva. It was built by G. Addor, D. Julliard and Honegger Brothers, and the glass and aluminium panels of its façades set off its very elegant proportions.



25 FERNEY ROAD

This centuries old road connecting Geneva to Gex crossed the Jura at the Faucille pass, and continued towards Paris. Today it marks the transition between the city and the international sector.

This very well-frequented route was built for haulage in the course of the 17th century. Situated between the Place des Nations (Nations Square) and Grand-Saconnex, and being bordered by the walls of the patrician properties on either side, it has been subjected to relatively little modification.



26 LA PASTORALE

This villa was built in a neo-classical style around 1835, with a slight avant-corps, a triangular fronton and arched bays. Today it houses the Geneva Welcome Center and various other activities that take place there. The annexes are made up of two buildings in the Bernese style : a wooden building cradled by vast vaulted roofing.

http://www.cagi.ch



27 ILO

At the time of its construction between 1970 and 1973, the ILO Headquarters, with its 1250 offices, aroused considerable controversy. This reflected the evolution of the role of the international organizations towards an increasingly important administrative role. This growing dimension was not overlooked by the architects and engineers : E. Beaudouin, A. Camenzind and P.-L. Nervi. The sheer size of the building, its mass and the very small moulded aluminium sections, giving the impression of infinite repetition, reflects the ILO's monumental look.

http://www.ilo.org



28 ICRC

This building, constructed between 1873 and 1876 by Ch. Boissonnas, and seat of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent since 1946, was originally the Thudicum boarding-school. 1920 -1926 it was the provisional HQ of the ILO prior to housing the Carlton Hotel until 1939.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent museum at the foot of the hill where the ICRC is situated, was designed in 1988 by the architects P. Zoelly, G.-J. Haefeli and M. Girardet.

www.icrc.org



29 AVENUE DE LA PAIX (Peace Avenue)

The old « Geneva Pregny road » was completely remodeled in 1934, with the building of the Avenue de la Paix. It connects two key international institutions of Geneva: the United Nations Organization and the ILO, at that time in the building that now houses the WTO (The William Rappard Center) at the lakeside.



30 THE ARIANA MUSEUM

To house his collections of paintings, porcelain and ceramics Gustave Revillod, patron and collector, had a museum built on his Varembe estate by the architect E. Grobety. He named this richly decorated neo-renaissance building after his mother, Ariane de la Rive. In 1890 the museum and the vast 18th century estate were bequeathed to the City of Geneva. The museum re-opened its doors in 1993 after a considerable amount of restoration.

Wednesday to Monday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed on Tuesdays

http://www.ville-ge.ch/culture



31 PALAIS DES NATIONS (Palace of Nations)

In 1919 Geneva was chosen to welcome the League of Nations. In 1926 the League of Nations launched an international architecture competition to design the Headquarters, the Palace of Nations, at the lakeside. However, the land available turned out to be too small. As it was impossible to find a bigger plot by the lake, the Ariana, which had been bequeathed to the City by Gustave Revillod, was chosen as a compromise. The international sector, already housing over 70 organisations in the 1930^a, moved from the lake to Varembe hill, where the buildings of the international Geneva gradually arise.

The Palace of Nations was thus born of the long and passionate debates that marked the 1926 competition : a real war of the proponents of the old and the modern styles : the Ancient and the Moderns. The project which was finally accepted was a compromise between four competing proposals of the architects J. Flegenhaimer, H.-P. Nénot, C. Lefèvre, C. Broggi and J. Vago. It was built between 1929 and 1936 in the classical tradition of 19th century public buildings. Between 1968 and 1973 a new wing was designed by E. Beaudouin, F. Bouvier, A. Gaillard and A. Lozeron. This extension was designed to be autonomous, with two totally modern buildings, each housing offices and auditoriums.

Visits: November to March : 10 to 12 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. (except on week-ends)
April to October : 10 to 12 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m. (including week-ends)
July and August : daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Entrance : Avenue de la Paix (the Pregny Gate)

http://www.unog.ch

Contact point with the walk : From estate to estate



32 PLACE DES NATIONS (Nations Square)

The Place des Nations, on which D. Berset's sculpture "Broken Chair" is at present displayed, has been the object of many studies and projects, but till today, none of them have been able to create a space in keeping with its symbolic value. The 1957 competition was won by the Frenchman A. Gutton, who planned to remodel the site by placing buildings around a square crossed by roads at several levels. It was never implemented. Forty years later a new competition was organised. The winning project of the architect M. Fuksas planned to erect buildings on the square itself. It was voted against in 1998, because the majority wanted the square to remain a meeting place, a place where demonstrations can be held amongst other things, in the heart of international Geneva.

Today a new project from the Orsol group is in preparation. It is entitled "The Esplanade of the Nations" and looks like a long parvis. Strips of four-meter wide granite blocks from different countries make up the "international ground" that alternates with strips of the "neutral" grey concrete paving slabs used by the City of Geneva. The water fountains will play in the center of the square in a variety of scenarios, while the changing lighting effect will create different atmospheres.



33 WIPO

The World Intellectual Property Organization, a specialized institution of the United Nations, is housed in the blue tower designed by architect P. Brillaud. Its blue glass facade in the form of a concave arch, catching the light and clouds, dominates Nations Square. The oval base of the building houses a large conference room and its façade is brought to life by a shower of water. The cafeteria on the top floor is open to the public, and offers a splendid view over Geneva and its harbour.

www.wipo.org



34 ITU

Erected according to the design of A. Bordigoni between 1958 and 1961, the tower of the International Telecommunications Union is one of the sole elements of the 1957 planning competition that was carried out. The winning project did, in fact, foresee the building of hexagonal towers around the square. Overdone by comparison with the original pentagonal design, the building nevertheless retains the monumental aspect the project tried to achieve. The window panes on its façades offer a shadow play, which accentuates the size of the building. The tower's rectangular partner in Varembe Street has recently been extended. Inaugurated in 1999, the building conceived by J.-J. Oberson has a simple and unadorned shape with a glass and metal façade. It is open to five levels, and lets light into the center of the building.

www.itu.int



35 HCR

Geneva has been the symbol of a land of refuge since the 16th century and the adoption in 1951 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, clearly confirms the city's role. In 1987, the High Commission for Refugees, guarantor of the rights and well being of refugees throughout the world, launched an architecture competition in 1987 for its new headquarters in Geneva. Its buildings, created by architects A. Gally, J. Berger, C. Steffen, U. Tschumi and M. Heurteux, and inaugurated in 1995, are set around a large inner courtyard topped by a glass dome. Facing the entrance to this new building is an information area created from a garage designed between 1935 and 1936 by M. Brillaud, to be the "Garage des Nations" (The Garage of Nations).

www.unhcr.ch



36 THE VILLA RIGOT PARK

The Villa Rigot park was formerly part of the large Varembe estate. But the building of the Avenue de la Paix in 1934 destroyed not only its continuity, but also the entire ensemble of which the mansion, built in 1767, was the center. All that remains of this classical layout along Avenue France is the walkway and the gate, and one outbuilding. The Promenade de la Paix "Peace promenade" from the lake to Grand-Saconnex, will cross this park. The new buildings of Sismondi College, designed by architects D. Baillif and R. Loponte, will be built along the Rigot Road.

Contact point with the walk : From quay to quay